

POSTHUMOUS WORKS

OF THE

Rev. THOMAS ADAM,

Late Rector of WINTRINGHAM.

IN THREE VOLUMES,

S. Bradburn

VOLUME III.

1786

CONTAINING AN

EXPOSITION of St. MATTHEW's GOSPEL.

WITH

Suitable LECTURES and PRAYERS.

To which are added,

SERMONS on different SUBJECTS.

Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though you know them—Moreover, I will endeavour that ye may be able, after my decease, to have these things always in remembrance, 2 Pet. chap. i. ver. 13—15.

Y. O R K :

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Samuel Bradburn

The Gift of
The Right Honourable
Lady Mary Fitzgerald.

Decr. 18. 1786.



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upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit
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SECTION

SECTION XLV.
EXPOSITION.

St. MATTHEW, Chap. xxi. ver. 1.

The first day of the Holy Week, or Sunday.

Mark xi. 1--11. Luke xix. 29--44. John xii. 12--19.

AND *when they drew nigh to Jerusalem, &c.—*

We are now to read of Jesus going to Jerusalem to put himself into the hands of the Jews, to die for our sins. Stop a moment. What is sin, when it could not be purged without his death? This then is the turning point; and here you will either begin to repent and believe the gospel, or continue sealed up in darkness. You may fancy you trust in him as your Saviour, as thousands do, because you have been taught to call him so; but all he did and suffered will be lost upon you, and you are blind, careless, and unbelieving, if the consideration of his death does not lead you to a right judgment of the heinous nature of sin, convince you of the necessity of faith in him for salvation from it, and turn your wills against it.

*Ver. 3. Straightway he will send them.—*Probably he knew Jesus, had a respect for him, and would have parted with a greater thing at his desire.

VOL. III.

A

Ver. 5.

Ver. 5. Behold, thy King cometh unto thee.—For thy great benefit. Is it thy own desire? Does thy heart burn for his coming to thee with his salvation? To what purpose dost thou read of him, and what can it signify to thee that he came then, or comes to all the world, if he does not come to thee?

—*Meek, and sitting upon an afs.*—Not in a stately manner. What will bring down the pride of our hearts? I suppose that riding upon an afs was no mark of grandeur amongst the Jews at that time, though it is still less so now with us.

Ver. 8. And a very great multitude spread their garments in the way, &c.—As they used to do at the creation, or solemn entry of their kings; thus owning Christ for their king.

Ver. 9. Hosanna.—That is, Lord, save us. What does thy heart say? Is this the cry of it?

—*Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.*—Oh! it will be a joyful time, and the true rest of your souls, when you can bless God for the salvation of Christ. And if you think of it, desire it, and pray for it, he will thus come to you. For this end he came into the world; and for this end we are now reading of him, that we may long and pray for the great blessing of his coming to us.

Ver. 10.

*Ver. 10. Who is this?—*Can you give the right answer? He is my God, my Jesus, my Saviour, my Beloved. He gave himself for me, and I will give him my heart, hear and obey him, and make it the great business of my life to live with him for ever.

*Ver. 11. This is Jesus the Prophet.—*What a mercy it is that we have such a prophet, to declare the will of God to us, and put us in the way to heaven! And what are we doing, when we pay little regard to his teaching, neglect his word, and have few prayers or none for a blessing upon it?

LECTURE.

AFTER the account of our Lord's birth, teaching, and miracles, we are now come, in the order of this gospel, to his publick entry into Jerusalem, where he was going to finish the great work for which he came into the world, and perfect his obedience, by suffering death upon the cross for our redemption. And this portion of scripture was written, and has now been read to you, that you might do as the multitude did, cry "Hosanna to the Son of David," and say with great joy in your hearts, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord, Hosanna in the highest." For what can it signify to you to hear of his coming; that is, with salvation in the name of the Lord to a world of lost sinners, if you are

not seeking after it, and made partakers of it, every one of you for yourselves? Do you then know who he is, and what you are? Did you ever think what he came for, and what the blessedness here spoken of is? This Son of David, according to the flesh, also was, and is, the eternal Son of the most high God; and he came into the world, by the decree and will of the Father, to seek and to save us, to purge our sins, to be our righteousness, to make us the children of God, to overcome death, to open the kingdom of heaven to us, and prepare us for it. Do you know that you are guilty souls, dead in sin, and naturally the children of wrath; and that you must have been outcasts from mercy for ever, if Christ had not wrought a great deliverance for you, by taking your sin and punishment upon himself, and suffering the curse of it in your stead? Do you understand how vile you are, how lost and helpless in yourselves, how great he is, and every way sufficient for the work he came to do; and can you help saying, with many thanksgivings to God, and great rejoicing in the conscience, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord?" Indeed, my friends, this is the trying point, this is all. Say this truly, with fulness of belief, and you are Christians. Say and do what else you will, unless you fly to Christ in the peril of your souls, make him your hope, and bless God for him, all the sins you ever committed, and they are more in number than the hairs of your head, will be laid to your charge. But will they not be laid to our charge, if we lay them upon his head in repentance,

repentance, and behold him with the eye of faith as the lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world? No, not one of them will ever rise up in judgment against us. He bore them all in his own body; and it is the joy of my heart this day to know and believe that he did not leave one sin behind him when he ascended the bloody cross. Take this comfort to yourselves; take Christ into your hearts; let them spring forward to meet him in his grace and love; do not give way to one despairing thought so long as there is a God in heaven, or a bible in the world.

It is true, our unworthiness is very great, and we have great cause to be deeply humbled for it; but let not this keep any of us from Christ, instead of driving us to him, seeing that our danger in sin, misery, and helplessness, was the very thing which brought him into the world to help us. See him as he is, the Son of God, and your Saviour in his blood, and you need not be afraid to know the worst of yourselves. It is your half-belief of Christ, and the fulness of his redemption, together with an ill-grounded trust in yourselves, which both hinders you from seeing the truth of your condition, and damps your joy of faith. And what I have farther to say to you concerning the blessed coming, and blessed Saviour here spoken of, is this; if you have been troubled for sin, and welcome Christ as your relief from the burden of it, and your sole comfort, you will be careful not to offend him by any kind of disobedience.

obedience. The man who says in his heart, What should I do but for Christ? will be as ready to say, What shall I do for Christ? And when he hears him saying, "If ye love me, keep my commandments," his answer is, Yes, Lord, thy love is great indeed, and I should think myself the basest of all creatures, and utterly unworthy to be thy disciple, if I lived in opposition to thy known will, or refused to do any thing at thy bidding.

If then we would be the better for his coming, we must answer the whole design of it; we must conform to his rule, and be faithful to him in his commands, repenting of our sins, striving against our corruptions, lamenting our imperfection, growing in grace, and resolving to live and die in his blest obedience. Not to trust in ourselves, or the merit of our own repentance and holiness, in the highest degree of them we shall ever attain; but because it is the temper and disposition of God's children, the proof of our adoption, a very precious part of our salvation by Christ, and necessary fitness for heaven; and what, therefore, he who so loved us, as to wash us from our sins in his own blood, cannot but require of all his disciples. Remember and believe, that through him only, we have peace with God, and that he is the Saviour of sinners in virtue of his life, death, resurrection, and ascension. In all your straits and troubles for sin, and when your fears are ready to prevail against you, let the acts, sufferings, and merits of Jesus be the stay

stay of your hearts, and the ground of your confidence towards God. Rest your souls, and the weight of your salvation, upon that saying, "Fear not, daughter of Sion, behold, thy King cometh unto thee meek, and sitting upon an ass and a colt the foal of an ass;" in the form of a servant, in the likeness of our flesh; not in the majesty of the Son of God; not in the state of a judge; not to condemn, but to save. But remember withal that he is thy King to rule over thee; that he never gave up that right; that he has marked out for us the way we are to walk in; that he has taught us to pray, "thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven;" and that we can never say truly, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord," nor have any benefit of his coming, unless we resign ourselves to his government, thank God for his teaching as well as death, and make it the burden of our prayers to be established in the faith of his love, and the love of his commands.

The P R A Y E R.

BLESSED be thy name, O Lord, and blessed be he that cometh in thy name, to bring us the glad tidings of reconciliation with thee, to purge our sins by the sacrifice of himself, to quicken our dead souls, and to set up in us thy kingdom of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. Give us grace to receive it with all humility and thankfulness, to keep thy great goodness always in remembrance, and be faithful

to

to it in obedience. Let thy well-beloved Son, the Lord Jesus Christ our Saviour, be the refuge and stay of our souls, and the ground of our confidence towards thee; that whenever our guilty consciences rise up against us, and the sense of our vileness terrifies us, we may be kept from despair, and delivered from all our fears, by a stedfast faith in thy mercy, and by looking to the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world. Prepare us, we beseech thee, to receive him in repentance and faith, and with an earnest desire of his blessings; that knowing the grace and power of his first coming, in the forgiveness of our sins, and the purity of our lives, we may behold him with joy unspeakable in the glory of his second coming, and be received into thy everlasting kingdom in heaven, through the same Jesus Christ, our only Saviour and Redeemer. Amen.

SECTION XLVI.

EXPOSITION.

ST. MATTHEW, Chap. xxi. ver. 12.

The second day.

Mark xi. 12--19. Luke xix. 45--48. John xii. 20--43.

AND Jesus went into the temple of God.—So come, Lord, into our souls, to make them pure, and sacred temples of the Holy Ghost, and cast every thing out of them which is unsuitable

suitable to the place of God's residence, 1 Cor. vi. 19.
2 Cor. vi. 16.

Ver. 12. And cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple.—The outer court of it, in the open air. Their pretence for keeping a market there, was to accommodate those who came to the feast with beasts for sacrifice, &c. But Christ judged this to be a profanation of the Holy Place, and would not suffer it to be converted to common use on any account whatsoever.

Ver. 13. My house shall be called the house of prayer.—Now lift up your hearts, in a devout wish that *this* may always be the house of prayer to you, of heavenly thoughts, holy breathings after God, and reverent attention to his word.

—*But ye have made it a den of thieves.*—Did he know them to be remarkably such? Or is it intimated that injustice, which, in God's eyes, is robbery, sticks close to buying and selling?

Ver. 14. And the blind and the lame came to him in the temple, and he healed them.—Our blessed Saviour's zeal for the house of God, does not make him inattentive to the wants of the afflicted. We seldom read of the exercise of his power in judgment, but often see it exerted in acts of mercy. Wherever he was, in the temple or in a private house, in a populous city or in a desert, we find him surrounded by miserable objects, whose application for help he never rejected.

We may learn from hence the kindness of his compassionate heart, and how ready he is at all times to heal the maladies of our souls. If we are sensible of our spiritual blindness and inability to walk in his ways, we do not look up to him in vain.

Ver. 15. And when the chief Priests and Scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, &c.—they were sore displeased. Ver. 16. And said unto him, Hearest thou what these say?—Those who will not cry, “Hosanna to the Son of David,” hate, and are sore displeased with those that do, and labour all they can to stop their mouths.

—And Jesus saith unto them, Yea; Have ye never read?—Yes; a thousand times, without understanding it.

—Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise.—Let us beseech God that this may be verified in us; as it will, if we resign ourselves in humility, and an unfeigned sense of our blindness, to the great Teacher. Without him we are all babes, one as well as another, high or low, rich or poor, learned or unlearned; and he who alone teaches any, can teach all effectually, and make the meanest and most ignorant praise God for their conversion by him.

Ver. 17. And he left them.—To their own hardness and impenitence. O Jesus! what are we when thou leavest us? And why are we given up

to

to so fore a judgment, but because we first leave thee?

Ver. 18. Now in the morning as he returned into the city.—In the morning of this same day.

—*And when he saw a fig-tree in the way, he came to it, &c.*—He who could blast the fig-tree with a word speaking, knew before he came to it that he should find no fruit on it. The design of his coming to it, was to teach us the dreadful issue of unfruitfulness, the impossibility of our bearing fruit when he withdraws his blessing, and the miraculous power of faith and prayer.

The Third Day.

Mark xi. 20—33. xii. 13. Luke xx. 21.

John xii. 44.—50.

Ver. 20. And when the disciples saw it, they marvelled, saying—That is, on the morning of the third day, as the times are exactly distinguished by St. Mark, chap. xi.

Ver. 21. If ye have faith, and doubt not, ye shall say unto this mountain, &c.—Did he say this only to the disciples, concerning outward miracles? No, verily; but we all want such a wonder-working faith for our own healing. When, therefore, thy temptation is strong, and thy sin hard to be overcome, never think of removing this mountain in thy own power, but fly to thy Al-

mighty, compassionate Saviour, who can both cleanse from sin, and give strength against it.

Ver. 21. And doubt not.—This is not added in vain. When we have a lively sense of our guilt and weakness, it is hard not to doubt: But call to mind what you know of Jesus, and that he came into the world for this very end, to convince you of his power and will to help you; that in the belief of it you might find rest to your souls, and be delivered from all your fears.

Ver. 22. And all things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.—My friends, this is a very comfortable assurance from Christ's own mouth, and great encouragement to prayer, if we did but know what we want, and what we should ask. See first whether your great want is not want of desire for spiritual blessings; for without it there is neither faith nor prayer.

L E C T U R E.

THE passages to be considered from the portion of scripture which has now been read, are, Christ's casting the buyers and sellers out of the temple; the displeasure of the Pharisees, when they saw his miracles, and heard the children crying out in the temple, "Hosanna to the Son of

of David." And his speaking to and blasting the barren fig-tree.

Did Christ cast the buyers and sellers out of the temple, overthrowing the tables of the money-changers, and the seats of them that sold doves, with a holy indignation against them for carrying on their worldly traffick there? Take notice of this. They had some pretence for doing what they did, viz. to have sheep and oxen ready at hand for those who came to offer sacrifice, and to furnish them with the tribute money which they paid yearly to the temple, in exchange for other things. I say, this was a plausible pretence for what they did : But it was nothing to Christ ; he would at no rate suffer the place of God's worship, nor any part belonging to it, not the outer court of the temple, to be profaned by any kind of worldly business. I say, take some notice of this, and let Christ teach you what regard you are to have for the places more immediately set apart for God's worship and service. Let God's house be the house of prayer to you, and when you come there think of nothing but the proper business of it. Go directly into the church, and call to mind what you come there for, whose presence you are in, and what wants you have to be supplied. Leave your worldly thoughts behind you ; leave your common talk without the gates ; the church, or church porch, is no place for it, and I wish you would be advised in this respect. You would, if you yourselves were the temples of the living God. If you desired that Christ should

should dwell in you, and cast every thing out of you which is unsuitable to so holy a presence, you would be prepared for the instruction now before you, hear him saying, "my house is the house of prayer," and reverence it as such, by putting your souls into a proper form and posture for the sacred business of it as often as you come there. And let this be the great use and improvement of what you have been hearing. Say to yourselves, God will dwell in my heart, as his temple, if I desire it, and will receive the Holy Spirit into it to cleanse it for him; and pray for yourselves that you may be his sons and daughters, his people, pure Christians, and such as he will own, by casting every thing out of your hearts with which he cannot dwell.

When Jesus had cast the buyers and sellers out of the temple, we read that the blind and the lame came to him there, and he healed them. As these are some of the last of our Lord's miracles mentioned by St. Matthew, let me press it upon you once more, as I have done all along in the reading of this gospel, to consider the end and design of them as to yourselves, that you may come to him in faith for your own cure, forgiveness of sins, and new hearts turned to God. For you are by nature the blind and the lame; ignorant of your condition, and blind to your true interest; averse to the will of God, and unable of yourselves to turn to him, and walk in the way of his commandments. And till you know it, and look to Christ for healing, whatever you hear of his miracles, whatever you believe
of

of his power, will be without effect as to you; he is not your Helper and Saviour. And let not the meanness of your condition, or want of learning, be any discouragement to you; as you love your souls, make it not a pretence for living and dying without the knowledge of Christ, and consequently of salvation by him. Hear him saying, "out of the mouths of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise." Beg of God that his praise may be perfected in you, by your knowledge and joyful acceptance of his grace and mercy in Christ Jesus; as it certainly will, if you resign yourselves in humility, and with an unfeigned sense of your blindness, to Christ the great Teacher. Without him we are all babes, one as well as another, high or low, rich or poor, learned or unlearned; and he who alone teaches any, can teach all effectually, and make the meanest and most ignorant praise God for their conversion by him. And though all the world should be displeased with you, when you are in earnest in turning to Christ, and do all in their power to stop your mouths when you are crying after him, regard them not; when you know your want of him, and find of a truth that you must be undone without him, keep close to him, keep on praying. He blasted the fig-tree on purpose, that you might know what will be the end of an unfruitful state, and what prayer will do for you. It is said, "the disciples marvelled when they saw how soon the fig-tree withered away." First, take heed that this be not your doom. Then remember the application which Christ himself made of this miracle,

racle, viz. to convince us of the mighty power of the prayer of faith. Our corruption is great, our weakness is great, and we might well be daunted at the sight of them if we had nothing to trust in but ourselves; but the mercy of God is above all our sins, and his strength will be our support; and we are as sure as his word and promise can make us, that whatever we ask of him, trusting in his goodness, and believing his power, will be done for us, though ever so difficult in itself. We cannot remove the mountain, but nothing is impossible with God; and every time we fall down upon our knees, we pray for as great a miracle, if we know for what we pray.

The P R A Y E R.

O Lord our God, pour upon us the Spirit of grace and supplications, to receive the instructions, and follow the doctrine of the great Teacher, thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord, with all humility and thankfulness. As thou hast taught us what is acceptable unto thee, and delivered to us the rule of holy living; we beseech thee, turn the desire of our hearts to it, and all our hearts to thee in prayer for a blessing upon what we learn from thy holy word. Convince us of our blindness, corruption, and weakness, that we may come to Christ for help, rejoice in his salvation, and in the power of the Holy Ghost be enabled to do whatever thou requirest of us. Make us thy own people, make our souls and bodies thy
living

living temples ; that, consecrating ourselves to thee in faith and purity, and reverencing thee in our hearts, we may gladly embrace all occasions of presenting ourselves before thee in thy house as the house of prayer, worship thee in spirit and in truth whilst we live here upon earth, and sing praises to thee for ever in heaven, with all those whom thou hast redeemed to thyself by the blood of Jesus Christ, our blessed Lord and Saviour.
Amen.

SECTION XLVII.

E X P O S I T I O N.

St. MATTHEW, Chap. xxi. ver. 24.

I Will also ask you one thing.—For their farther instruction, if they would have been sincere with him ; for their confusion, as they were not.

Ver. 25. And they reasoned with themselves, &c.—Look at thyself. This was miserable shuffling, but is very common. There is no acting avowedly against conscience and reason ; but the misfortune is, we have always some kind of sophistry at hand, to stifle the one, and blind the other, when we have no mind to be convinced.

Ver. 27. We cannot tell.—They would not.—*Neither tell I you*—is the the most grievous of all curses. Lord, grant we may never bring it upon ourselves, nor deprive ourselves of the benefit of

thy teaching, by our insincerity and opposition to the truth.

Ver. 28. Son, go work to day in my vineyard.—So he says to us all every day concerning the great work we have to do under him.

Ver. 29. He answered, and said, I will not.—What wouldst thou think of thy heart, if it was as well known to thyself as it is to God, that it often says this ?

—*But afterward he repented, and went.*—Observe ; repentance is an effectual change of the mind, and actual going into the vineyard.

Ver. 31. The publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you.—The very refuse of mankind sooner repent and turn to Christ, accept grace, and enter upon his way of salvation, here called the kingdom of God, than those who are high in their own and the world's esteem ; and having an outward decency of behaviour to pride themselves in, stand upon it with God, and see no need of conversion.

Ver. 32. For John came to you in the way of righteousness, &c.—In vain does John, or Christ, come in the way of righteousness, as teachers and examples of it, to those who think they know, and are possessed of it before.

LECTURE.

LECTURE.

WHEN the chief priests and elders of the people asked Jesus "by what authority he did these things," making a publick entry into Jerusalem, receiving the acclamations of the multitude as he that was to come in the name of the Lord, the blessed Son of David, the Messiah, and casting the buyers and sellers out of the temple, instead of giving them satisfaction in the point, and telling them plainly who he was, he evaded their question, by asking them another which he knew they would not answer. Not that he feared the worst they could do to him; for he was ready to offer himself to death, and came to Jerusalem for that purpose. Let us then consider what we have heard. It may seem strange that he who was the light of the world, and came to save mankind, should leave them in the dark concerning himself, and refuse them the information they seemed to desire, as it was a matter on which their salvation depended. But the truth is, their design was not to learn of him, but to ensnare him; and he who knew what was in their hearts, and how utterly unprepared they were to profit by his instruction, gave them such an answer as might lead them into the knowledge of themselves, and, upon the whole, refused to acquaint them who he was, and by what authority he acted.

You see then in this instance how we must be qualified for Christ's teaching, and why we are, generally speaking, so little better for it. If there is an honest heart, and a willing mind, sincerely desirous of saving knowledge, he is ready for us ; he will not suffer us to be ignorant, or deceived. If there is no such will and desire, no disposition to hear the truth from his mouth, nothing but guile and deceit in the heart, he may, and does frequently, leave us to ourselves ; and that is just the same with respect to our souls, as it would be to our bodies, or to the earth, if the sun was to withdraw his light ; we are in horrible darkness all our lives, and understand nothing so as to come to conversion and healing. Take heed, therefore, that Christ does not speak these words to you. For I appeal to yourselves ; where is the difference between his saying, " neither tell I you," that is, never teaching us any thing, and our stopping our ears, and hardening our hearts against what he does teach us ? And such is the condition of all those who neglect the scripture ; and though they are baptized in the name of Christ, and often hear him spoken of as the Saviour of the world, yet not knowing what they want him for, desire none of his blessings. He came with authority from God to open the kingdom of heaven, and they wilfully shut it against themselves. He tells them over and over again who he is, and brings them the glad tidings of salvation, and they remain in woful ignorance of him, and never ask their hearts what they shall gain or lose, as they do or do not receive him.

Are

Are you concerned in what I am now saying? Do any of you set so little value upon Christ, and your portion in him, as not to study and take pains to know what you must do to obtain and secure it? Has he given you means of saving knowledge in abundance, put the book of scripture into your hands to guide you to heaven, and do you let it lie in dust upon your shelves, week after week, without looking into it? Or if you do sometimes cast an eye upon it, is it for a right end, and with a serious and godly purpose, with thankfulness to God for the light he has given you, with prayer to have it shine into your hearts, with earnest desire to know as exactly as you can who Christ is, by what authority he speaks, and what is the will of God for your salvation? Think of what you have heard from this chapter, think of his coming in the name of the Lord with a message of peace to a condemned world, with the offer of life to mankind dead in trespasses and sins; think of his going to Jerusalem to be made a sacrifice of atonement; ask yourselves the meaning of these things, and then think how sad your condition will be if he does not come to you in the truth and power of his teaching, to give you the knowledge of himself as the Saviour in his blood, and the Lord our righteousness; to turn you from darkness to light, and put those words into your mouths, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord."

And let us observe carefully from this passage of scripture, that though we are ever so well instructed

structed in the knowledge of Christ and his doctrine, it will not make us his disciples, if it is not received into the ground of an honest and good heart. It is not our Christian name and profession that will entitle us to this blessedness. Obedience is Christ's peremptory demand upon all that call him Lord, and one of his choicest blessings; and when he asks the question concerning the two persons, one of whom readily promised to go and work in the vineyard, but went not; the other, who at first refused, afterwards repented and went—"Whether of them twain did the will of his father?" He gives us plainly to understand that nothing will be accounted to us of God for duty, nor prove us to be his children, but entering upon his work. This is the test we must all be brought to at the great day of account; and, therefore, what we should bring ourselves to before that time comes. Publicans and harlots, that is, persons of the worst characters may repent, and if they do, will find mercy; but whatever we think of ourselves, the kingdom of heaven cannot receive us, unless we are found in the way of righteousness which John preached, and Christ confirmed, and has bound upon us by his authority.

The

The P R A Y E R.

O Lord, who hast sent thy blessed Son a light into the world, and givest thy Spirit to guide us into all truth; grant us grace thankfully to receive, and obediently to follow the doctrine he has delivered to us in thy name. Let the study of thy word be our constant employment, and the delight of our souls, that we may know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent. From all blindness and hardness of heart; from all guile and insincerity, good Lord, deliver us. Help us to discover and remove all the impediments to thy coming and gracious presence in our souls. Open our eyes, turn us from darkness to light, confirm us in the faith of thy mercy, and make us fruitful in all good works. Grant that, by thy holy inspiration, we may think those things that be good, and, by thy merciful guiding, may perform the same thro' our Lord Jesus Christ. *Amen.*

S E C T I O N XLVIII.

E X P O S I T I O N.

St. MATTHEW, Chap. xxi. ver. 33.

THERE was a certain householder which planted a vineyard.—The Jewish church. Apply what is said to yourselves, and to your own state and condition under the gospel.

Ver. 33.

Ver. 33. And hedged it round about, &c.—Nothing was wanting on his part to put it in a condition of bearing fruit. What has not God done for you? You are his vineyard, planted by Christ. You have his word with you, hear it read and preached, are commanded to pray for a blessing from heaven, and expect the Spirit to give an increase.

Ver. 34. He sent his servants, &c.—The prophets, one after another, to the Jews; the apostles, in their writings to you; his ministers at all times. He sends to you this very hour, in these very words now read by me. Are you ready with your fruit? If you are not, think what you have to do for the remainder of your lives. You have yet a little precious time in your hands. Remember that last of all the Lord himself cometh. How sad will be your condition if you have no fruit for him at the hour of death!

Ver. 35. And the husbandmen took his servants, and beat one, &c.—Men are always the same; and if they are not ready for Christ, will beat, and kill his servants.

Ver. 37. But last of all, he sent unto them his Son.—What patience, what love was here; that, after all their contempt of him, and ill usage of his messengers, he should send his Son to them!

Blessed God, thou didst send him to us, when we were enemies to thee by wicked works, and perishing

perishing in our sins. Grant that we may receive him as thy Son, and our only Saviour.

Ver. 39. And they caught Him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him.—As all do in effect, who will not repent and turn to God, and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ to save them from the guilt and power of their sins.

Ver. 41. They say unto him, He will miserably destroy those wicked men.—The Jews, and all others, in hell, who, like them, reject Christ. He made them own the justice of their condemnation, and pronounce sentence upon themselves.

—*And will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, &c.*—To all the other nations of the earth; to us. God help us, and make us walk worthy of the mercy he has shewed us, by bringing forth the fruit he expects to find in us, faith and holiness.

Ver. 42. The stone which the builders rejected, is become the head of the corner.—For strength and ornament. Such miserable builders there are at all times. Many amongst us reject this stone with as much scorn as the Jews did. Many, tho' they do not reject it in avowed unbelief, yet throw it aside, and make no more use of it, as to any work of spiritual building, than if they had it not.

Ver. 42. This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes.—God did this, by raising him from the dead, setting him at his own right hand, and making that same Jesus, who was crucified, both Lord and Christ. Let him be thine. He is made the head of the corner, that we may make him so to ourselves, elect and precious. And, oh! that we might all say, in the power of a true faith, and our conversion to God by him, “this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes!”

Ver. 43. The kingdom of God shall be taken from you.—It will be taken from all for the same reason; that is, all the blessings and benefits of it will be lost to us by our unbelief and unfruitfulness.

Ver. 44. And whosoever shall fall on this stone.—Stumble at Christ, his word and doctrine; does not receive him, or is no better for him.

—Shall be broken.—Does it to his own great damage, and is in danger of perishing, if he does not repent.

—But on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.—The fall of it was heavy upon the Jews; it will be heavier still, upon all unbelievers under the gospel, when he comes to judgment.

Ver. 45.

Ver. 45. They perceived that he spake of them.—
And were only the more enraged by it. Lord,
when thou speakest of us, and against us, let it be
for our conviction; for thou speakest in love, and
smitest only to heal us.

*Ver. 46. They feared the multitude, because they
took him for a prophet.—*The people were forward
to own him for a prophet, when the chief priests
and learned pharisees were blind. Observe this
again; and never say that your hearts are beyond
the power of God, and that he cannot make you
take Christ for your prophet, believe and obey
him.

LECTURE.

IF we were in a state of pure submission to the
teaching of Christ, we should be able, with
great ease and readiness, to apply whatever we
read in scripture to ourselves, and convert it to
our own use and benefit: For it speaks alike to
men at all times, and every age, and all persons
are alike concerned in the instruction it holds
forth to us, and alike called upon to make their
own advantage of it. For instance; in the para-
ble we have now been hearing, Christ speaks par-
ticularly to, and of the Jews, and of the destruc-
tion which was coming upon them for slighting
all the means which God had used for their re-
formation; ill treating and persecuting the mes-
sengers he sent to them from time to time, and at

last filling up the measure of their iniquities by killing his Son. Now, if you should ask what is this parable to us, and how are we concerned in it? I would desire you to observe and consider what instruction an attentive, serious reader of scripture would draw from it, and how we may all make it profitable to our own souls. Were the Jews favoured of God more than any other nation; received into covenant with him as his own people; living under his immediate government and protection; and heirs of his promises? And was the threatening we here read of, "that on whomsoever the stone should fall it would grind him to powder," more especially levelled against them, and not many years after actually executed upon them in the sorest judgments that ever befel any people? O Christian, "if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee." Here is a terrible warning to all flesh. Wherever sin is found, the nature of it is to give us up to destruction. For God hates it alike in all persons and places; and in vain do we boast ourselves in the name of Jesus, and expect favour at the hands of God on account of our baptism and Christian profession, if we do not make it good by the purity of our lives. We cannot be more his people than the Jews were; and for the same reason that he punished them, we may be sure he will reject us, whenever, by our sins, we provoke his displeasure, and render ourselves unworthy of his mercy.

Consider,

Consider, therefore, what you read, and learn from this example that no profession, name, or outward privileges, will be your security in the day of judgment; but, instead thereof, an aggravation of your sin and punishment, if you continue unreformed, and abuse the advantages which God has put in your power. And if you are a conscientious reader of scripture, and receive it as the word and testimony of God, you will look narrowly at this parable, and ask yourself, as you will answer it to your soul, whether the whole, or any part of it, belongs to you. The vineyard was the Jewish then, is now the Christian church, planted by God, and put into a condition of bearing fruit. Think, O man, whoever thou art that hearest this, has God done all that was necessary, and more than thou couldest expect, to bring thee to a fruit-bearing state, and is the day coming when he will look for his fruit at thy hands? Has he not sent his messengers, his holy prophets and apostles to thee? Have they not brought thee light from heaven, delivered to thee all that was put into their hearts, and made known to thee the will of God for thy salvation, and is not thy minister appointed to bring it continually to thy remembrance? Is not the book of scripture, which thou hast in thy hands, an account of what God has been doing in the world from the beginning of it for the recovery of lost mankind? Is not the Lord Jesus Christ, his only Son, therein revealed to thee as thy Saviour, to purge thy sins with his own blood, to set thee in the way of life, to bring thy straying heart back
again.

again to God, and make thee a new creature fit for heaven? I say, bethink yourselves what effect all this has had upon your souls. Do you reverence the Son? Is Christ precious to you? Have you fruit for him? Do you pray? Do you hear him with deep attention speaking to you in his word? Do you receive it with great thankfulness to God? Do you make it the guide of your consciences? Do you think it your bounden duty to live unto him that died for you? If you do not, but make little account of his bloodshedding and teaching, neither knowing what you want him for, nor blessing God for him, nor desiring his salvation, nor chusing to be governed by him; I must tell you the truth, you are the same men, whatever else you do, whatever you may think of yourselves, and have the same hearts with those who said, "This is the heir, come let us kill him." Beware, therefore, lest, by rejecting him in unbelief, or refusing his work, and having no fruit to shew for yourselves, you read your doom in those words, "whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken, and on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder." If Christ is not the rejoicing of your souls as your Saviour; sent of God to deliver you from the guilt and power of your sins; to take that burden from your consciences, and bear rule in your hearts, perceive and confess this day that the parable speaks to you; not to fret and harden yourselves against it, but to beseech God that it may be the opening of your eyes, and that you may make haste and escape for your lives; knowing that the time

is

is coming on apace when the Lord of the vineyard will require an account of what we have all been doing in it, and render to every man according to his work.

The P R A Y E R.

O Lord, who hast called us to the knowledge of thy grace and mercy in Jesus Christ; make us, we beseech thee, thy own people in truth and purity, and grant that we may give all diligence to make our calling and election sure, by living unto him that died for us. From all blindness and hardness of heart, good Lord deliver us, and enable us this day, and all the days of our lives, to search and examine ourselves by the doctrine of thy holy word. Let thy light and thy truth, which thou hast sent down from above, guide our feet into the way of peace; and as thou hast given us thy only Son to be a sacrifice of atonement for all our sins, give us grace to receive him in all his offices, as our Saviour, Teacher, and Lawgiver; that, rejoicing in thy salvation, we may have our fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life, for the sake, and through the alone merits of the same Jesus Christ, our blessed Mediator and Redeemer. *Amen.*

SECTION

SECTION XLIX.

E X P O S I T I O N.

St. MATTHEW, Chap. xxii. ver. 2.

THE kingdom of heaven, &c.—In its present state, as beginning here upon earth, though ending in heaven, considered with respect to our entrance into it, continuance and improvement in it now whilst we live.

—*Which made a marriage for his Son.*—Believers know how to conceive of this from other parts of scripture, as a strict marriage with the King's son, the Lord Jesus Christ, in which we are one flesh, and one spirit with him; and, in virtue of this union, received to a full participation of his merits and perfect righteousness, brought into a fruit-bearing state, and live in subjection to him as our Lord and Husband.

Ver. 3. To call them that were bidden.—The Jews. It was the will of God that they, as the seed of Abraham, and his covenanted people, should be first invited. But you will perceive in what follows, that we are now invited as well as they; and, therefore, in the opening of the parable, must apply every part of it to ourselves. Blessed be God, all are bidden. You have your call in these words, this very hour, to the marriage; that is, as you have heard to be joined in marriage with Christ, that he may take us, with
our

our sins, to himself, and we may take him to purge the guilt, and deliver us from the power of sin, and present us to God in himself.

Ver. 3. And they would not come.—See here the cause of man's damnation—an opposing will.

Ver. 4. Behold, I have prepared my dinner.—It is of God's preparing, and salvation is freely offered to us. Behold, also, the riches of God's patience and forbearance; and how he allures us, by setting before us the plenty of good things he has provided. We might be ashamed to refuse his first invitation; let us not harden ourselves against a second. We should come at once, if he called us to nothing else but oxen and fatlings.

—*All things are ready.*—The Saviour, in all his offices, always; peace with God, rest for the soul in his favour, and newness of life by the Spirit.

—*Come unto the marriage.*—Think who says come, and to what grace and mercy you are invited. Think you hear this voice now from heaven, and that you may never hear it again. Are you come? If you are not, and will not, what farther proof do you need of the desperate wickedness, and natural aversion of your heart from God?

Ver. 5. But they made light of it, &c.—Merchandise, and the farm, must not be neglected. The scripture is as much for honest industry as any

book in the world. Nevertheless, the preferring of any thing to God, to our interest in Christ, and the grace of the gospel, is a damnable state, and a great part of mankind are ruined by the necessary business of the world. You think, verily, you do not make light of the invitation; and yet you may bring the matter to a short issue with yourselves. Do you read the scripture, to know what you are invited to, and with prayer to have it opened to you? Do you rejoice to hear of God's love in Christ, and is it the great wish of your hearts to be partakers of it?

Ver. 6. And the remnant, &c.—This is mentioned as a still higher degree of wickedness. Such is the nature of men; and such too often the return they make to those who are sent to them with the truth, and declare it faithfully.

Ver. 7. The King was wroth, &c.—This part of divine Revelation is sadly slighted. We do not believe God's anger or righteous judgment, tho' the scripture so plainly declares it, and abounds with examples of it; and this threatening, especially, was fully executed upon the Jews for a warning and instruction to mankind.

Ver. 8. They which were bidden were not worthy.—Called, though unworthy; and always unworthy of so great a mercy; but absolutely and finally unworthy by their refusal of it, or living unreformed under it.

Ver. 9.

Ver. 9. Go ye therefore into the highways, &c.—To the Gentiles; to us, who sat in darkness, and in the region and shadow of death, that all the ends of the world might remember themselves, and be turned unto the Lord. Blessed be God, here is no exception of any; the invitation is as much made to every one of us, as if our names had been particularly set down in writing.

Ver. 10. So those servants went out.—The apostles, and a great company of preachers. They still speak to, and invite us in their writings; and others in their words, by commission and authority from Christ.

—*Bad and good.*—The kingdom of heaven here upon earth, or Christ's church, consists of a mixture of good and bad; and many are gathered into it by baptism and outward profession, who do not truly belong to it. Consider upon what ground you stand forth. Attend carefully to what follows.

Ver. 11. And when the King came in to see the guests.—Where shall we hide ourselves from that eye? O! where from our own, in the day when the King comes in to see the guests, if we have not on a wedding-garment? For we shall then be as naked and open to ourselves, as we are always to him. God be merciful to us, and bring us to such a sight of ourselves *now*, as may qualify us to understand the design of the gospel, and prepare us for the mercy of it.

Ver. 11. He saw there a man which had not on a wedding-garment.—What can that be but faith in the righteousness of Christ, and the holiness which springs from it, or a conscience purged from the guilt, and a heart from the love of sin?

Ver. 12. And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither, &c.—What vain confidence is this, and upon what pretence art thou here, in a garb so different from the rest, and with a heart so unsuitable to the place and company? Hear God now speaking to thee in love, and whilst there is hope: “Why dost thou call thyself a Christian, and expect to be owned as such, without taking Christ for the covering of thy soul, and being clothed with the graces of the Spirit?” My friends, how dreadful to hear it said, or but to think it may be said, this is no place for thee! and not have a word to reply.

—And he was speechless.—What will you have to say then for your good hearts and good meanings, smooth life or good nature, if you have not been rooted and grounded in Christ, and followers of him in faith and love?

Ver. 13. Bind him hand and feet, &c.—O severe judgment, and yet kind warning! Mercy waits on us, pleads with us, and calls aloud to us now; but, as sure as you hear these words, will be at an end with you for ever, if you do not embrace and make use of it whilst you live. To be cast out of the place of feasting, finely illuminated, and
furnished

furnished with every thing to gratify and delight the senses, into outer darkness, is a faint, and but a very faint, resemblance of the misery of eternal separation from the splendor and glories of heaven, and confinement to the horrible darkness of the bottomless pit.

Ver. 14. For many are called, but few are chosen.— All are called that they might be chosen; and then why are they not? They will find the answer in themselves. You have heard it already; they *will* not come, they make light of the call, think more of the world than of Christ, and will not seek to him according to the will of God.

L E C T U R E.

THE kingdom of heaven in this parable, and generally in the gospels, is the state and condition of mankind under Christ in this world, as they are called to be partakers of his blessings. For by the kingdom of heaven here spoken of, as consisting of a mixture of good and bad, cannot be understood the kingdom of heaven after death, into which none who are unworthy will be admitted; but, as I am telling you, the state of mankind under the gospel, or Christ's kingdom here upon earth. Of this kingdom we are the visible people and subjects, who profess to believe in his salvation, to be governed by him, and to prepare for his coming; when we shall either be
received

received into his everlasting kingdom of glory, or shut out of it for ever. And if you are in earnest with God and your souls in reading the scripture, receive it as the counsel and will of God for your salvation, and desire in truth and singleness of heart to reap the benefit of it, you will ask yourselves some such questions as these concerning the parable now before us. Who is the Inviter? Who are the invited? What is the marriage to which they are invited? What is required of them in order to their coming to it? What will entitle those who do come to the esteem and approbation of the Master of the feast? The Inviter is God, of his own free grace and mercy. The invited are first, and principally, the Jews, his own people. And when they not only refused the invitation for worldly reasons, but persecuted and slew the messengers which were sent to them, command was given to bring in all the other nations of the earth; so that the wedding was furnished with guests, of which number you are by baptism and outward profession. But do you know what the marriage is to which you are invited? It is to be espoused to the Saviour Jesus Christ, the Son of God, to be made bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh, and so joined to the Lord as to be one spirit; he taking us to himself with all our poverty, misery, and sin, foul and spotted, vile and abominable as we are, and giving himself to us with all he has, and is, his love, his heart, his blood, his righteousness, his sonship, his dearness to God, his heaven. How wonderful is this! and what reason have we to say, with admiration
and

and great astonishment, "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we," poor worms of the earth, sinful dust and ashes, "should be called," and actually be, "the sons of God," in virtue of our union with his well-beloved Son, and by his right and title.

But I beseech you call to mind that in this, as well as all other marriage-contracts, there must be a consent of both parties. If Christ gives himself to us with all his blessings, with his whole self, he expects that we should give ourselves to him freely and fully, rejoicing in the offer he makes us, and resolving to forsake all other for him. And, know to your great comfort, that, for the present, or at the time of your entering into this state, he requires nothing of you but your cordial, joyful acceptance of him. When you think who he is, and what you are, you will stand amazed at the tender he makes you, and be looking out for some kind of portion to bring him some goodness or worthiness of your own; but you must let that alone for ever. God gives him, and he gives himself to us, because we are helpless and perishing without him; and if you do not always keep his love, his goodness, his condescension, separate in your minds from any goodness or worthiness of your own, any thing you are or do, you do not take him upon his own terms. He knows that we have nothing but sin and misery belonging to us, and till we know and confess from the bottom of our hearts that we have nothing else, and believe that he is willing to take us as we are,

he

he does not give himself to us. Indeed, my brethren, these are glad tidings to a world of polluted, guilty creatures, and we should leap for joy to hear them. But, alas! the generality give but cold entertainment to the offer of Christ, and his riches; and if you would examine your consciences this night before you go to sleep, I fear you would find, either that the world shuts him out of your hearts, or that you will neither part with your sins for him, nor acknowledge your vileness in sin; and so you come to the feast of his providing without a wedding-garment. By which I understand chiefly, the spotless robe of Christ's righteousness, because our own cannot endure the pure eye of God; and which, as it was wrought by him for our sakes, and not for his own, who needed it not, so it becomes ours by our union with him, is accounted to us of God for our fulfilling of the law, and appointed by him for our perfect cleanness in his sight. And this robe faith puts upon us, that is, when it makes us vile and impure in our own eyes, strips us of all pretensions to a justifying righteousness of our own, accepts Christ for salvation, and gives to God the glory of his grace, and of all we have or hope for.

But though we must, of necessity, have this garment to appear in before God, and the gift of it is unspeakably precious, and what we all wait for our eternal justification, yet you must be well aware that it is no covering for an unchristian life, or a rotten heart. For "every man that hath this

this hope in him," who hopes to sit down with Christ in his kingdom, "purifieth himself even as he is pure." He knows from all scripture, that if he would be owned by Christ as his disciple, and a member of his body, he must live by his rule, and take his words for the guide of his heart and conscience. And he comes to him also for this end, that he may be instructed by him in the will of God, and made "meet to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light;" remembering always, that, "without holiness no man shall see the Lord;" and that though we are perfect and accepted only in Christ, yet we must prove our faith by its fruits; and be daily on our knees to God to keep us in the way that leadeth to everlasting life.

The P R A Y E R.

ALMIGHTY God, who inviteſt us to partake of the bleſſings which thou haſt prepared for us in thy Son Jeſus Chriſt; give us grace to come in upon thy call without delay. Deliver us from the dreadful guilt of deſpiſing thy great mercy, or living unworthy of it. Call powerfully to every ſoul here preſent, thou who workeſt in us both to will and to do of thy good pleaſure. Convince us of our great impurity, and bring us to the fountain which thou haſt opened for ſin and uncleanness; that, being waſhed in the blood of Jeſus, and renewed to the love of holineſs, by the effectual working of the Spirit, we may walk with thee as obedient children

in the way of thy commandments, and, at last, be presented unto thee by Jesus Christ in the spotless robe of his righteousness. Hear us, O Lord, in his name, thy beloved Son, in whom alone thou art well pleased; and grant us so to believe and live, that we may be found of thee in the wedding-garment, and received into thy everlasting kingdom in heaven, for his sake, and through his alone merits, the same Jesus Christ, our blessed Saviour and Redeemer. *Amen.*

SECTION L.

EXPOSITION.

St. MATTHEW, Chap. xxii. ver. 16.

THE Pharisees sent unto him their disciples, with the Herodians, &c.—The Pharisees refused subjection to the Roman Government; the Herodians were opposite to them in this point, and their design was to entrap him, let him answer how he would.

Ver. 21. Render therefore unto Cæsar, the things which are Cæsar's.—This was for the Pharisees, who were against paying tribute to Cæsar, and would please the Herodians.

—And unto God, the things that are God's, This was for the Herodians, who were loose in their notions of religion, and would please the Pharisees.

Pharisees. It is remarkable, that, without giving a direct answer to their question, he reprov'd and pleas'd both, and so avoided the snare they had laid for him.

Let not our Lord's command to pay the tribute pass without notice. If selling and buying uncultomed goods is not a downright breach of it, what is? And as nothing is more common, so there is nothing in which men may more easily discover the unsoundness of their principles, and the rottenness of their hearts. No *reputation* is lost by it, and, therefore, conscience can be quite easy in the matter. The same may be said concerning God's due from us to the poor, and the payment of tithes, which we may very well suppose to be included in the command, to render to God the things that are God's. The heart too, is not that God's due in the first place? When we are disposed, by the renewal of our wills in Christ Jesus, to render to God his due tribute of veneration and worship, love and obedience, we shall give all the world their due.

Ver. 22. They marvelled.—Were struck dumb with admiration of his wisdom.

F 2 LECTURE.

LECTURE.

THE use I would make of the portion of scripture which has now been read, is to put you upon searching yourselves in the point of obedience; whether you take Christ for your Lord and Master, receive his commands without disputing or gain-saying, think it your duty and happiness to be governed by him in all things, and are set down in this belief, that, without such a child-like submission to his teaching and authority, he will never own you as his disciples. Lay your hands upon your hearts, bring what you have heard home to yourselves, and apply it closely. Let me take occasion from hence, to desire you would examine with great care and seriousness, as persons who are concerned for their souls, and would not be deceived with respect to them for the world. Examine, I say, into the sincerity of your disposition to learn of Christ, and the truth of your obedience to God.

In the two instances here mentioned, of "rendering to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God the things that are God's," that is, neither defrauding the publick in selling or buying uncustomed goods, nor robbing God of what you know is his due from you to the poor or his ministers, you may probably have made light of your obedience, and cast Christ's commands behind your backs.

The generality of professing Christians do this without scruple, which shews but too plainly how little

little they are governed by the fear of God, or any true principles of religion. But remember that Christ will let none of his words fall to the ground; neither will you, if you are Christians. He says plainly and positively, that "whoever shall break one of the least of his commandments"—not that any of them are little in themselves; but as we are foolishly and wickedly apt to think—"and shall teach men so"—directly, and by declaring and avowing his contempt of them—"shall be least in the kingdom of heaven"—shall never enter into it.

But what I would put you upon considering more especially from the passage of scripture now before us, and the observations I have made upon it, is, how your obedience stands in all other cases, and with regard to the general purpose and intention of your hearts. Do you say to Christ, Master, "tell me, teach me," with a sincere design to hear and practise what he tells you? Is it a settled rule with you to say upon all occasions, and with respect to every command, this is Christ's teaching, and I must, and will, through grace, be directed by him? If I live in the breach of his commands, or make a light matter of any of them, I know it is disclaiming my interest in him, and that he will be no Saviour to me. Thus we should purpose, say, and do. Indeed, my brethren, this, and nothing but this, is being Christ's disciples. When the Herodians and Pharisees brought him a piece of money, he said unto them, "Whose

“Whose is this image and superscription?” In like manner, when we hear any of the commands of God, thou shalt do this, thou shalt not do that, if we are faithful and obedient followers of our Lord, we shall say to ourselves, Whose is this image and superscription? Whose image does this command bear? Whose authority is it stamped with? With nothing less than the authority of the most high God; who certainly commands on purpose that he may be obeyed, and whom our Saviour advises us to fear, because his punishment is not, like that of earthly powers, only in this world, but “because he can destroy both body and soul in hell.” And if we consider farther, that all his commands are for our own good, and for the good of the world, and that we cannot break one of them without doing mischief to ourselves or others; if we consider with how great a price Christ has bought us to his service, and how earnestly he requires us to shew our love to him, by keeping his commandments, we shall put ourselves once for all in the way of obedience, and pray constantly and sincerely to God to write all his laws in our hearts. Oh! what thanks do we owe him for the mercy of our redemption! What obligations are we under to live unto him that died for us? How happy should we be if that voice, which came from heaven, was deeply imprinted, and always ruling in our hearts, “this is my beloved son, hear ye him!” The believer does hear him, rejoicing in the salvation of Christ, and making his obedience a free-will offering to God for Christ’s sake; whatever he does, doing it

it heartily, as unto the Lord, and making it his great request to God, to be faithful to the Master who bought him with his blood.

The P R A Y E R.

O Lord God Almighty, just and holy, our Maker, Preserver, Governor, and Judge; strike into our souls such a lively awe of thy dread presence, sovereignty, and purity, that we may fear nothing so much as to offend thee, desire nothing so much as to please thee, and be disposed in all things to obey thy blessed will. We are bound to thank thee for commanding us to consult the good of others, and the peace of our own lives; we are bound to thank thee for restraining us from doing mischief to others, and hurting ourselves; and more especially are we bound to thank thee for striking at the root of all evil in us, and laying thy command upon our hearts. For out of them are the issues of life; all our sin proceeds from that corrupt fountain, there thou lookest for the good or evil that is in us; and whatever we do is neither acceptable to thee, nor comfortable to ourselves, unless we do it heartily as unto thee, for the command's sake, for conscience sake, for Christ's sake, and with a pure desire to please thee. But, O Lord, seeing that of ourselves we can do nothing, help us with thy grace to be sincere with thee, our God, by faithfully endeavouring to keep thy commandments; that being renewed to holiness in the inner man,

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we may be found of thee in peace, and received to the reward of that perfect righteousness, which is treasured up for us in Jesus Christ, and given to all who come unto thee by him, our blessed and only Saviour. *Amen.*

SECTION LI.

E X P O S I T I O N.

St. MATTHEW, Chap. xxii. ver. 29.

Y*E do err, not knowing the scriptures.*—Worldly minds, more disposed to cavil than believe, cannot know them; they must, of all necessity, pervert them.—Our Lord's inference is plain; if you would not err, you must know them. And all who read them in simplicity, and with an honest heart, to know the will of God that they may do it, *shall* know them. They are able to make all wise unto salvation, through faith that is in Jesus, being God's gift to men for this end; and not to know them, is to put out our own eyes. If you had a deed of gift, though but of a small property, which depended upon your knowing what was contained in it, What would you do?

—*Nor the power of God.*—Fully manifested in scripture.

Ver. 32. I am the God of Abraham, &c.—Not for this world, chiefly. He is the God of the faithful

faithful for better things. It is their glory and distinction to believe in him for them; and as they do this, upon the warrant of his word and promise, he cannot deceive them.

—*God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.*
 Alive after death, as to their souls. But the soul is not the man. The conclusion, therefore, is certain, that the body must be raised to make the perfect man which God created.

L E C T U R E.

THE Sadducees, we are told, held that there is no resurrection, or life after this; and one of their cavils, as we learn from this passage of scripture, was, that they could not conceive, in the case of a woman having several husbands, how she could be the wife of them all after death; grossly supposing, that if there was a resurrection, all things would continue the same in a future state as they are now, and that we should have the same bodies, passions, appetites, and enjoyments that we now have. And, therefore, when they came to Christ with their puzzling question, as they thought, about the woman and her seven husbands, he shewed them their mistake, in taking it for granted, that there would be marriages in heaven; and also gave them a proof of the resurrection from one of the books of Moses, which was the only part of scripture they admitted, having first pointed out to them the cause of their

unbelief in these words, "Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God."

I would speak a word to you upon this ; I beseech you, let us take notice of it. Why are we generally so regardless of our future, everlasting concerns ? Why are we so bowed down to the earth, and live only for the world ? Why do we not understand and consider in what respect God is our God, and for what we are chiefly to believe in him ? Why are we not more convinced of the necessity of caring for the soul ; and why are any of us at a loss to know what we must do to be saved ? Our Lord here leads us to the root of all our wretched carelessness, mistakes, and unbelief, as well as he did the Sadducees. Take heed, therefore, that the words are not spoken to and of you—"Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures." If you studied to know the scripture, resolved to walk in the light of it, took it for the guide of your hearts and consciences, and regarded every word of it as you would a voice immediately spoken to you from heaven, it would give a new turn to your judgments, thoughts, and desires ; it would teach you to know God and yourselves, and to believe in God for better things than you can have here ; it would set you in the way of happiness, persuade you to make this life a preparation for a better, and guide you in every step of it. If it is the light which God has in mercy put into your hands for these purposes, What can you think of yourselves in the neglect of it ? And what can be the consequence of your
not

not knowing it, but darkness, perpetual error, and dead carelessness in the things which belong to your everlasting peace? If it is eternal life, the beginning of it, the way to it, the assurance of it, to "know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent," Where shall we find this knowledge? How can we attain to this life but by direction from God himself, as revealed to us in the book of scripture? We are naturally in a state of great ignorance of God and divine things, too apt to say with the Sadducees, and too generally live, in the spite of warning and instruction from God, as if we thought as they did, "let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." My brethren, there is but one remedy for all this; know the scriptures, that you may know your God; know your Saviour; know yourselves; know your danger; know the worth of your souls; know what hopes you are born to, and how to secure them: I say again, if you would not live and die in error, know the scriptures. Begin your enquiry into these things where St. Matthew begins his gospel, "thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins." Take occasion from hence, to ask yourselves what sin is; and think how great the misery of our condition in sin must be, when we could be saved from it by no other way or means than the incarnation and death of the Son of God. Follow him from one chapter to another with close attention, and mark diligently, as you go along, what he has done for the assurance of your faith, and to raise you to a cheerful trust and confidence

in him as your Saviour and Almighty Helper. Make the proper use and application of every miracle of healing which he wrought on the bodies of men, and say to yourselves, this is for me; I am sick of a deadly distemper, and want healing for my soul. His miracles were great mercies to those whom he cured; but they are greater to me, if they are so understood and believed as to bring me to him for his salvation, for the pardon of my sins, for a clean heart and a right spirit, and for my acceptance with God, and to fix me in a state of diligent preparation for eternity.

The P R A Y E R.

ALMIGHTY GOD, who shewest to them that are in error the light of thy truth, to the intent that they may return into the way of righteousness; send down thy holy Spirit to illuminate and quicken us, and to groan within us for the blessings of thy children. Let thy word be precious to our souls, and the devout study of it the constant employment of our lives, that we may know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent. To know thee as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and rejoice in his salvation, is eternal life. Thou who sparedst not thy own Son, but didst deliver him up for us all, and wilt also freely with him give us all things; give us, we beseech thee, a lively faith in this thy mercy, and, together with it, obedient wills and pure hearts. Sanctify and
bless

bless us, and accept us for the sake of Jesus Christ, our only Saviour and Redeemer. *Amen.*

SECTION LII.

E X P O S I T I O N.

St. MATTHEW, Chap. xxii. ver. 35.

A Lawyer.—Not in our sense of the word; but one supposing himself well skilled in the law of Moses, and all scripture, and qualified to be a teacher of it.

—*Tempting him.*—With design to sound him as to his knowledge and principles.

Ver. 38, 39. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, &c.—Love of God with all the heart, &c. and of our neighbour with such a sanctified love as we should love ourselves, is our duty and happiness; we were made for it, are in an unnatural, perverted state in the want of it, and must have it restored to us. Now be a sincere man, and confess that thou hast lost this Paradise. When thou knowest it, and findest there is no help in thyself, thou wilt be in pain to know how to regain it. The bible tells thee, by faith in the pardoning love of God in Christ, warming thy heart with gratitude and love to him, and charity to mankind, for his sake. This is your light from heaven, the point in which all the rays

rays of scripture meet, and the heart of God opened to us for our renewal to a state of unfeigned regard to the two great commandments. I pray God we may all be supported continually with the thought, that we are travelling under the guidance of the Spirit to the region of perfect love.

Ver. 40. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.—It is the great end of them to establish these duties; and, if we are not convinced of the necessity of them, and aiming at them in sincerity, and with a perfect heart, all scripture is lost upon us.

What think ye of Christ? &c.—He now in his turn proposes a question to them, to convince them of their ignorance of scripture, and withal to open a way for their acknowledgment of him as the Christ, David's Son, and yet his and their Lord.

Ver. 43. How then doth David in spirit call him Lord?—Is he only David's Lord? And can any call him Lord but in and by the Spirit, as David did?

Ver. 44. Till I make thine enemies thy footstool.—He is only so far our Lord, as we believe in him for salvation, and go to him for help to subdue our sins, his and our greatest enemies.

Ver. 46.

Ver. 46. And no man was able to answer him a word.—Now, therefore, O Lord, let this be the effect of our reading, that we may never again answer thee a word; that when thou makest enquiry for sin, we may confess the charge that is against us; when thou offerest to help our infirmities, and give rest to our souls, we may gladly receive thee as our peace-maker; when thou teachest, we may submit to thy infallible wisdom; when thou commandest, we may obey from the heart.

LECTURE.

I Would once more remind you of those words, “Whosoever shall break one of the least of these commandments, and shall teach men so, shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven.” Hear and reverence your Lord. Let this thought be uppermost in our minds, and always ruling in our hearts, that as he has an absolute right to govern us, perfect wisdom to direct us, loves us with entire affection, and commands nothing but what he knows to be for our good; so it is both our duty and interest, what he earnestly requires of us as the proof of our faith in him, and the only return we can make him for all his benefits, to submit to his teaching, and receive all his instructions, with the simplicity of little children. For if we make any reserve in our obedience, if we suppose any of his commands may be dispensed with, any that he reminds us of, or recommends

recommends to us, may be disregarded, if in any one point, though it seem ever so trifling to us, we set up our own wills or fancies against his wisdom and authority ; in so doing we put ourselves in his place, we become our own masters, we prescribe a law to him instead of receiving one from him, and cannot be entitled to the name and reward of his disciples. He, therefore, is the Christian, the man after Christ's own heart, the happy man, if there is one upon earth, who takes the whole yoke of Christ upon him, and makes it the great aim and steady purpose of his life, to fashion himself in every thing by the rule he has set before him.

But if we are thus under a law to Christ, and if we would be his friends and servants, we must account nothing small or insignificant which he requires of us ; and, certainly, we are bound in the highest degree to the observation of what he tells us is the first and great commandment, "the love of God with all the heart, mind, soul, and strength." Do you ever ask yourselves what it is, what it is founded upon, and whether it is the mark you are aiming at ? We know very well what we mean by the word *love* in other cases, what it is to love any thing else, how far we desire it, and what we are doing to get and keep possession of it. And especially, if there is any one to whom we are greatly obliged, whose friendship we esteem, and on whom our well-being depends, we are affected with a sense of his kindnesses, find them to be the kindling of our love
to

to him, dread the loss of his favour, and should think ourselves utterly inexcusable if we did not study to please him. Try your love of God by this rule. As we do not see him with our bodily eyes, we cannot well have the same passionate feeling of a sensible love to him, which we have for some other things, husband, wife, or child; but, nevertheless, we may have what perhaps is the best and truest love of the God and Father of our Spirits; we may perceive him ruling in our minds; we may keep up a steady, prevailing regard to him in all we do, and he may be dearer to us than all the world. He is, when we are ready to forego any advantage, and deny ourselves any earthly pleasure, rather than disobey him.

If you have this proof to give of your love of God, that you love him in his will, truly desire to please him, are never so unhappy as when you do any thing to offend him, and grieve for nothing so much as your coming short of that perfect obedience which he requires of you, you may set your hearts at ease, the love of God bears sway in you, and you have Christ's own words for your comfort and assurance in the case, "ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you." And if you so love God as to do whatever he commands, and because he commands it, you cannot be at a loss to know upon what ground you do it. It is because you have some suitable apprehension of his goodness; but more especially, and above all, of his love to mankind in

Christ Jesus. "We love God," says St. John, "because he first loved us," when we believe, and understand with the heart, that God gave his only begotten Son to die for us; that in him we are justified, accepted, beloved; that he bore our sins in his own body on the cross, and that they will never rise up against us to condemnation; we have such a powerful call in this manifestation of his goodness to love him again, and such a prevailing reason for it, as we cannot well resist. See, therefore, on what ground chiefly the love of God is to be built, and how it takes possession of us. We have great cause, on many accounts, to admire and adore his excellencies and perfections. Our lives, and the support of them, the sun that shines upon us, the rain that waters our fields, the air we breathe, the bread we eat, every thing about us and belonging to us, proclaim his goodness, and demand our highest gratitude. But scripture-knowledge goes beyond all this, and Christian faith shews him to us in a still more amiable light; and if the discovery he has made to us, of his grace and goodness in the wonderful manner of our redemption, does not incline us to love him, to seek his favour, to value his peace, and inspire us with a resolution to keep it, by a sincere endeavour to please him in obedience, we must not pretend that we believe in him as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Let me, therefore, remind you of the question here put to the Pharisees, "What think ye of Christ?" Is he your Saviour in his blood? And is not this a mighty argument of his love to you, and a strong reason why you should take him for your Master

Master too, thank God for his teaching, treasure up his words in your hearts and memories, and be always improving under him in that love of God which is your perfection and happiness?

But is there not also another commandment, like unto the first, great in its obligation, springing from the same root of faith, and only differing in its object? Yes, the love of our neighbour; which, when it flows from the love of God, and is our tribute of gratitude to him, becomes divine, and is a far more noble principle of action than any degree of natural instinct or humanity. And when we know that God requires it of us, as the expression of our love to him, and has in some measure made over the love we owe him to mankind, as to the outward exercise of it, we shall think it our great distinction as Christians to abound in love to one another; and, according to our abilities and opportunities, shew it by all proper acts of kindness, godlike pity, and real help, to every soul of man, for God's sake.

The P R A Y E R.

O Lord, we pray thee send down thy Spirit to kindle the holy fire of love in our hearts. Let the sense of thy excellencies and perfections, various gifts and blessings, be always present to our minds, and the continual subject of our meditations, that we may adore, and bless, and imitate thee. The heavens declare thy glory, the

earth is filled with thy bounties, and wherever we turn our eyes, we see thee in the riches of thy goodness. But thou hast more especially manifested thy love to mankind, and magnified thy name and thy glory, by giving thy only-begotten Son to die for us. Give us, we beseech thee, such a true knowledge of thee as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and such an assured faith in thy great mercy to us in him, that we may love thee, for the great love wherewith thou hast loved us, and all mankind for thy sake; do all our works on this ground, and be accepted of thee for the sake, and through the alone merits of Jesus Christ. *Amen.*

SECTION LIII.

E X P O S I T I O N.

St. MATTHEW, Chap. xxiii. ver. 1.

THEN spake Jesus to the multitude.—All being concerned in what he had to say of the Scribes and Pharisees.

Ver. 2. Sit in Moses seat.—He does not deny them to be authorized teachers, and expounders of the law.

Ver. 3. All therefore, &c.—Not with respect to their traditions; for he tolerated his disciples in the neglect of some of them, if he did not enjoin it,

it, chap. xv. but with respect to the more substantial and unquestionable matters of duty.

Ver. 3. That observe and do.—Make the right use of this for yourselves. If the command is God's, receive it as such, notwithstanding the ill example of the teacher.

—Do not ye after their works.—Wherein soever they transgress any of the commandments.

—For they say, and do not.—What they should do, or think they do, to be just in the sight of God. Notwithstanding a shew of strictness in some things, their practice was corrupt, and their hearts more so.

Ver. 4. For they bind heavy burdens, &c.—What were these heavy burdens? Not their traditions. It is true, they would not give the people any ease or relaxation from them, and were scrupulous observers of them themselves. But it will appear throughout this chapter, that the controversy, which Christ had with them, was concerning weightier matters. Not the moral law. For they could not carry it to a greater height, nor require a more punctual obedience to it than he himself did. The difference, therefore, betwixt them was, they bound the law, together with their traditions, upon men for salvation, and tied them strictly up to a *covenant of works*. This it was which made *their* burden heavy, as St. Peter plainly tells us, *Acts* xv. 10. and was, in effect, pronouncing

pronouncing their own damnation, as they came short of it. Whereas Christ, without diminishing from the obligation of the law, has both removed the burden of it as a *covenant*, and made the observation of it as a *rule* more easy.

Ver. 4. But they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers.—To make them lighter; neither coming themselves, nor suffering others to come to Christ, the reliever of our burdens, and the true rest of our souls, chap. xi. 28—30. It is, therefore, no wonder, that they would not move the burden with one of their fingers, in another sense; that is, of doing what they imposed upon others; that some of them were corrupt in their lives; and others, whatever they pretended, or however they appeared to men, were sadly defective in the sight of God, as to any pure and perfect obedience of the heart, *Gal. vi. 13.* And this our Lord, who knew what was in man, has here fully laid open, for the conviction of all such unbelieving, self-righteous hypocrites.

Ver. 5. But all their works they do, for to be seen of men.—The meaning is not, that they directly proposed this mean end to themselves, but that it lay close at the root of all they did, whether they knew it or not. And I suppose that Christ is here chiefly taking the veil from their hearts. Yea, and from ours too. This one thing, of having an eye to men, it is to be feared will wipe a great part of the good that is done in the world out of God's book; for nothing is good but as it
is

is done to *him*. Lord, search us with this word, and send us to our hearts, that we may know whether thou rulest there ; and that the good we do may not be found evil, by proceeding from base motives ; nor expose us to a greater condemnation, by enflaming our pride.

—*They make broad their Phylacteries.*—That is, *Preservatives* ; as memorials of their duty, and to keep them from transgression. These were pieces of parchment, with the Ten Commandments, or other sentences of the law, written upon them, which they bound upon their wrists and foreheads ; and it does not appear that they were so commanded, *Ex. xiii. xix. xvi. Dt. vi. viii. xi. xviii.* The borders, or fringes in their garments, were, *Num. xv. 38.* And they exceeded in both, mistaking the letter for the spirit. Now it is plain that these, and a hundred such things, were no burdens, but an easy substitute for deadness to the world, an humble heart, and a clean conscience.

Ver. 6, 7. And love the uppermost rooms, &c.—Doubtless they sat down in the highest room with a strained courtesy, and not in an open, bare-faced manner ; for this would have lost them the esteem they sought after. Observe Christ's word ; he says they *loved* distinction and titles. O ! the heart ! there *he* looks, and there he aims his blow.

Ver. 8.

Ver. 8. But be not ye called Rabbi.—To look great in your own eyes, as thinking the title of master your due.

—*For one is your master, even Christ.* He is so in reality, and he only is worthy of the name.

—*And all ye are brethren.*—If we do not learn this of him, we learn nothing.

Ver. 9. And call no man your father upon earth.—To submit your understandings to him, for this is God's prerogative.

Ver. 10. Neither be ye called masters.—Observe the repetition. Christ knows the pride of our natures, and how deeply it is rooted in them, and, therefore, speaks to the point a second time.

Ver. 11. But he that is greatest among you, shall be your servant.—Account no otherwise of himself than as an instrument, in the hand of God, to promote his glory, and stoop to all for the good of all.

Ver. 12. And whosoever shall exalt himself.—Lies horribly to God and himself, is as low in God's esteem as he is high in his own, and shall find it to his cost.

—*And he that shall humble himself, &c.*—Dwells in the truth. Lord, help here. Though we are dust and ashes, and our all is sin and misery,
thou

thou knowest we are not sufficiently humble. It is hard work to bring down our pride; but nothing is impossible with thee, and great as this mountain is, thou canst remove it.

Ver. 13. But wo unto you Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites; for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men, &c.—Christ's kingdom of grace and help; by a false conceit of a righteousness of their own, and ability to attain it, which they had not. There are many degrees of hypocrisy, or hypocrites; but they are the most dangerous, and most effectually shut the kingdom of heaven against themselves and others, who think they can do what they cannot, and do what they do not.

—Ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering, to go in.—This is as true of those who talk of the moral sense, beauty of virtue, and fitness of things, as sufficiently evident, and sufficient guides to mankind. Which is nothing but speculative unbelief; and though some are not aware of it, it is in fact pleaded by others as the ground of their opposition to the gospel.

Ver. 14. Devour widows houses.—No kind of oppression was too great for them. And yet, doubtless, they, who were so scrupulous in paying tithes of the smallest things, condemned, and pretended to abhor all manner of injustice and oppression.

Ver. 15. Ye make him two fold more the child of hell than yourselves.—Nothing is more common
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than for converts to be over-zealous in their new way ; and if it is bad, doubly bad.

Ver. 16—22. Whofoever fhall fwear by the temple, it is nothing, &c.—Perhaps the manner of fwearing by other things rather than God, was introduced out of a too fuperftitious reverence for his name. Our Saviour's decifion is, that fuch diftinctions are frivolous ; and that all oaths, as fuch, are binding, as carrying in them an appeal to God.

LECTURE.

IN fpeaking to this paffage of fcripture, I have told you what I fuppofe is to be underftood by the Pharifees “ binding heavy burdens upon the people, and not touching them with one of their fingers,” that is, to make them lighter. It could not be their requiring of them ftrict conformity to the moral law ; for they had no power to allow of lefs than was commanded, and would have been anfwerable to God for their prefumption in fo doing ; neither could they carry the point of obedience beyond what Chrift himfelf did in his fermon on the mount, and efpecially where he fays, “ till heaven and earth pafs, one jot or one tittle fhall in no wife pafs from the law, till all be fulfilled.” If it was their traditions, as many expofitors fay, it is true they had invented a great many things over and above what was prefcribed in the law of Mofes, which they
ftrictly

strictly observed themselves, and as rigorously bound upon others. But then it cannot be supposed that our Lord, who, as it appears from other places of scripture, did not approve of their traditions, would have said concerning *them*, "all, therefore, whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do;" for this would have been binding the same burden upon men's shoulders, doing himself what he blamed in the Pharisees, and confirming it by his authority. One thing, I told you there was, in the doctrine of the Pharisees, which was a heavy burden indeed, and a galling yoke upon themselves, and upon the necks of mankind, who are always fond of the notion, how defective soever they may be in their practice, namely, their teaching, and insisting upon obedience, or a law-work, for life. You will say at once, Must we not obey? Can any attain to life, or be saved, without obedience? Does not all scripture require it? Does not Christ himself carry it to the highest degree of perfection? Does he not say plainly, "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments?" Yes; but the mistake lies, and a fatal one it is, in making our obedience the ground, or meritorious cause of salvation; as if we could present it to God without any imperfection, or spot of sin, and challenge the reward of it at his hands. This then was their great error, I will venture to say it is the bane of all teaching and preaching, and one or two questions will set you right in the point. Why did Christ die for the sin of the world? Why is faith, in his sacrifice, required of us in order to salvation, if

we are to look only in ourselves for the ground of it, and might boldly plead our own obedience before God for our eternal justification? But let us never be so foolish as to bind this burden upon ourselves, I mean, of working for life; for no man upon earth was ever able to bear it, if you will believe St. Peter, *Acts* xv. 10. and the attempt is as impossible, as it is ruinous to the soul. It is robbing Christ of his glorious, beloved name Jesus, and taking it to ourselves. It is the very strength of unbelief, and coming before God with a lie in our mouths, unless our obedience was perfect in the strict sense of the word. And, therefore, Jesus, who was so meek and lowly in heart, who received all that came to him with so much condescension, spoke to them with such tenderness, and had such comfort for perishing sinners, in this chapter, and elsewhere, reproves the Pharisees with great sharpness and severity; knowing how contrary their doctrine was to the great design of his coming into the world, and to the wants of his creatures; and because they said and did not; pretended to a great deal more than they made good, and set such an unreasonable value upon their works, as to make them the price of their salvation.

Do you, dearly beloved, learn to know yourselves better; know your corruption and weakness; believe the scripture; understand the meaning of the word *redemption*, and how deliverance comes to you; abhor the doctrine which would make you your own Saviours; let God be true
and

every man a liar. Methinks you have now a proper occasion to consider what Christ has done to make your burden light, and to call to mind those sweet words of his, "come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Christ's rest is God's peace, pardon to the sinner, mercy to the guilty, a covenant of life to the dead, blessing and comfort showered down from heaven as freely as the rain comes upon our fields; and the Christian, who knows his want of the gift, how unspeakably great it is in itself, and how dearly it was purchased for him, receives it thankfully as such, makes it his happiness, rejoices in it before God, and does all his works in the belief of it; not to trust in them for life, not to make them the rest and stay of his soul, and the ground of his everlasting hopes, but in love to Christ, with freedom of spirit, and to shew that he has obtained mercy. He knows and feels his obligations to the Saviour, calls him Master and Lord, in truth and sincerity, resigns himself to his teaching only, grieves for nothing so much as that he is not more lively in his obedience, and stands continually before God with this prayer in his heart, Thy will be done.

The P R A Y E R.

O Lord, who resistest the proud, and givest grace unto the humble, make us to know and feel in the depth of our hearts, that we are sinful dust and ashes. Convince us that we are

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as blind and weak, as we are corrupt; that being enlightened by thy word and Spirit, we may cry to thee for mercy, be revived with the hope of forgiveness, and enabled by the mighty power of thy grace to purge ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit. Blessed be thou, O God, for the glad tidings of the gospel of peace, and for thy covenant of life in Jesus Christ. Grant that we may make it the rest of our souls, glory only in the cross of Christ, and receive him with all humility and thankfulness as the Lord our righteousness. Deliver us from the false teaching of others, and from that pride in ourselves, which would make us our own Saviours. Oh! take the veil from every heart, that being as naked and open to ourselves as we are to thee, and meekly acknowledging our vileness, we may take the Lord Jesus Christ for our Teacher and Master, be washed clean from all spot of sin in his blood, and quickened by his Spirit, live unto him by his rule, and be accepted for his sake, our blessed Redeemer. *Amen.*

SECTION LIV.

EXPOSITION.

St. MATTHEW, Chap. xxiii. ver. 23.

YE pay tithe of mint, and anise, and cummin, and have omitted, &c.—Is it possible that they, who were so scrupulous in paying tithes of the smallest

smallest trifles, should be chargeable with this guilt? It is well, if many of us do not thus deceive ourselves by a compliance with the outward part of religion, when the inward is neglected; or an exact observation of some commands, which do not much thwart our humour, or interest, when we are sadly defective in the weightier matters of justice and mercy to men, and faith in, or faithfulness to God.

Ver. 23. These ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.—Happy is the man, who has a regard to all his duty; and neither makes one part of it a pretence for overlooking another, nor thinks any thing little which God has commanded.

Ver. 24. Ye blind guides, which strain at (out) a gnat, and swallow a camel.—Nice in small matters, when hardly any sin was too great for them. Grievous as this charge may seem, probably you may find it to be your own case, if you will abide by the scripture-estimate of sin. To mention only one instance. Love of God with all the heart, mind, soul, and strength, is the first and great commandment. Now what can it signify that your life is exact and well ordered in other respects, if you make no conscience of this great duty, and can swallow the great sin of not loving God?

Ver. 25. Ye make clean the outside of the cup, &c. This is to be understood of the outside and inside of the man.

Ver. 26.

Ver. 26. Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within, &c.—Observe this upon the peril of your souls. This is Christ's order, and in his method we shall go on successfully with our work. We lose all by inverting it; and are never so blind and so foul inwardly, as when we deceive the world and ourselves with an outward washing.

O Jesus, do thou cleanse that which is within, with thy word, thy blood, thy Spirit. For till thou dost, we are all filthy and polluted; and thou, therefore, camest into the world, that we might know and abhor the evil that is in us, and by thee be presented to God with pure and clean hearts.

Ver. 27. Ye are like unto whited sepulchres.—Would the sight and stench of a corpse, putrifying in the grave, offend thee? Thou art the man, and just so abominable to God, when thou hast begun thy work at the wrong end, and covered up a rotten inside with a beautiful appearance; it may be very beautiful; civility, prayers, alms-deeds, and what not.

Ver. 28. Even so ye also outwardly, &c.—If this does not put us upon examining ourselves, we are in great danger of being the persons here described.

Ver. 29. Ye build the tombs of the prophets, &c.—What could be more plausible than their building and adorning the tombs of the prophets, professing

sing an abhorrence of the sin of their fathers in putting them to death, and doing all they could to wash their hands of their blood? Will nothing do with the deep-searching Jesus, but the correspondent sincerity of the inner man? No; he has a heavier charge than ever to bring against them, grounded on this very circumstance of their owning themselves to be the descendants of such ancestors.

Ver. 31. Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children, &c.—They owned they were their children; and he tells them they were truly so in all respects, whether they would own it or not, of the very same nature, and altogether as blood-thirsty; which they soon proved, by crucifying Christ, and persecuting his followers.

Ver. 32. Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers.—They would; nothing could prevent it; he gives them up to their desert. We learn from hence that the sins of the fathers and the children, both together, go to fill up a certain measure, known to God; and that when it is filled up, destruction is at hand. This was then the unhappy case of the Jews; and no age or nation can be sure it will not be their own, but by not adding their sins to those of their forefathers.

Ver. 33. How can ye escape the damnation of hell? Then it is plain that their sufferings in this world would be no discharge from the much greater sufferings of the next. And what we have to

consider for ourselves is, whether God is not the same, and sin the same now that they were then.

Ver. 34. Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes.—Hear this. Bless God that he has sent them to you; and let this be your ruling thought and fixed persuasion, that if you would be truly wise, you must turn out all your own wisdom, and submit as babes to their teaching.

—*And some of them ye shall kill, &c.*—You have them not to kill, and think verily you would not have done it. But there is no way to be sure of this, but by shewing a sincere regard to their writings. For they are true disciples of Christ; break open the rotten sepulchre of the heart; call loudly for its cleansing, and give no more allowance to a smooth outside than *he* did; and what they say after him is very grating to human nature, and will either amend or provoke its graceless passions. It is a great mistake to suppose that the Scribes and Pharisees were such monsters of wickedness, as never appeared but once in the world. You would be amazed to hear of their great strictness in many respects; and yet trusting in themselves, and having not the Spirit, they were the men here described. And why is their character here given, but that they may stand as representatives of all mankind in the same circumstances, especially in the point of *persecution*, which is not the sin of the worst of men only,

only, but hardly ever to be rooted out of our natures?

Ver. 35. That upon you may come all the righteous blood, &c.—As if, with their blood-thirsty disposition, they had a hand in all the righteous blood that was shed from the beginning of the world. This is a great mystery. We must confess that the justice of God is an unknown depth, and not to be fathomed by our line.

Ver. 37. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, &c.—The expression is affecting, and the similitude as lively an image as all nature can afford, of his tenderness and love for that devoted city and people. He calls to them; his bowels yearn for them; he mourns over them; but if they will not hear, if they will not be gathered under his wings, mark it well, he cannot save them. Sinner, he speaks to thee and to me. Oh! that I had his compassionate heart for thee, and thou hadst a true feeling of it for thyself?

Ver. 38. Behold, your house (the temple) is left unto you desolate.—The great inhabitant had left it, and its destruction was inevitable. We hear our own doom in worse than temporal judgments, whenever we forsake *him*. Never delude yourselves with a confused hope of mercy, in an impenitent state, till you can blot this passage out of scripture.

Ver. 39. For I say unto you, ye shall not see me henceforth, &c.—Though they rejected him then, the time will come for the general conversion of their nation to the faith of Christ; which he here foretels, and is the subject of many prophecies. Now is the time of his coming to us, which only can be witnessed by our unfeigned faith in him, and acceptance of him for salvation. Lord, grant we may rejoice in it, fly to thee as a sanctuary from the guilt of sin, and the purifier of our hearts, and say from our own happy experience, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.

L E C T U R E.

IN this chapter our Lord directs us neither to call any man upon earth Father, so as, like children, to submit wholly to his wisdom, nor to affect the name of Master ourselves; to the end that our affections may be supremely fixed upon God, and his authority only acknowledged, and that we may resign our wills and understandings to the infallible Teacher. Who then is that master and teacher worthy of the name, and perfectly qualified for the office? The answer is here in the book, and you know very well it is Christ. But do your hearts give in the same answer? Does Christ rule there with sovereign authority, and do you take him for your guide to heaven and happiness? Just in proportion as you think of heaven as your happiness, and desire to be put in the way to it. For if you do not learn this lesson

lesson of him, to seek the kingdom of God, and his righteousness in the first place, you will slight all his other instructions, be your own masters, and go on blindfold all your lives in the way of your own wills. Consider, therefore, what you are doing in the world, and whether it is the great wish of your hearts to be at peace with God and alive unto God, that you may go to heaven when you die. If it is, you will go to Christ for direction, study his word, bind it upon your consciences, and make it the law of your inward parts. When you hear him condemning all manner of vain oaths, you will carry on your thoughts to the spiritual meaning, and learn of him to reverence the Lord God in your hearts. When you think who he is, and what right he has to be your master, that he comes to you with Almighty love in his heart, and the light of heaven in his hand; if you are in earnest with him, and truly concerned for yourselves, you will hardly be able to go to sleep without looking into his word to know what he has done for you; what he has delivered to you in the name of God; what commands he has laid upon you; and what counsel he has given you for the salvation of your immortal souls. And particularly when you hear him, throughout this chapter, censuring the Scribes and Pharisees with such severity of expression, you will ask yourselves, and endeavour to know what it was in their doctrine and practice that was so offensive to him. Strict in trifles, and outwardly saint-like, they were foul within, and wretchedly ignorant of themselves; they neither

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understood the law in its whole extent, nor laid the rule of it to their hearts, and at the same time were so grossly conceited of their own works, as to depend upon them for their admission into heaven. So will you; so do all till they call Christ Master, who prescribe a law to themselves, and, short as their obedience is, think no reward too great for it.

Let this chapter, therefore, be the touchstone of every heart. The Pharisee lies deep within us, and a decent outside is for the most part the sum total of our righteousness. But Christ has a piercing eye, and as he cannot be deceived, so he will not be put off with a form. In what then does he differ from other teachers? If he is so strict in his exposition of the law, requires such exact conformity to it, and comes so close to the heart with it, in what respect is he the reliever of our burdens, and what shall we gain by taking him for our master? All we want, or can desire. We shall learn of him to know God and ourselves; we shall know what sin is, what we are in sin, and how we are delivered from the curse of it; our wills will be in consent and agreement with the law of God, and we shall find the yoke of Christ made easy to us, by being reconciled in heart and affection to the whole and every part of it, both in its outward and inward meaning.

We are now coming near to the conclusion of this blessed gospel, and shall soon hear of Christ's dying upon the cross, to purge our sins, to bear
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our punishment, and to finish the work which the Father gave him to do, that he might be the Lord our righteousness. Is this no ease to the guilty conscience, no rest to the troubled mind? If we had been left to deal with the law, and make our peace with God as well as we could, we should have done just as the Pharisees did, shortened the rule of our duty, made a false reckoning of our own righteousness, and thought of nothing but forcing our way into heaven with it. But Christ, our Master, will teach us to know the purity of God, the strictness of his law, and our own miserable unworthiness better. He will carry us into the depth of our hearts, find sin in all we do, and convince us of it to our faces; not merely to upbraid us with it; not to leave us to perish in it; not to put us upon the impossible task of cleansing ourselves from it; but to make us sensible of the evil of sin and the greatness of our guilt, that in the peril of our souls we may cast our burden upon him, who alone could bear it, live by his death, and rejoice in his salvation. See now and consider this great thing which the Lord hath done for you. Come to him in self-knowledge, receive the mercy of a Saviour with the penitence and humility of an undone sinner, with a deep sense of your misery, and of the greatness of his love in your deliverance, and my life for it you will look for another blessing at his hands. You will gladly submit to his teaching in all things, long to be delivered from the corruption of an evil nature, beseech the Lord Jesus Christ to come into you as a refiner's fire to burn and

consume all your open and secret iniquities, and pray daily to be faithful to him in obedience, that, as the disciples of a crucified Lord, you may deny yourselves, wait in faith and holiness for his coming, and enter into his kingdom of everlasting rest.

The P R A Y E R.

HOLY Father, open our eyes, we beseech thee, to see the danger and misery of our condition in sin. Let thy Son be our Master to teach us the strictness and purity of thy law; let thy Spirit go with us into the depth of our hearts, to convince us of our transgressions of it; that we may fly to the mercy of the gospel, be revived with a sense of forgiveness, live unto him that died for us, and do all our works from a holy principle of faith and love to thee. Deliver us from all guile and hypocrisy, from all blindness and hardness of heart; and as we know the Lord Jesus Christ to be the way, the truth, and the life, grant that we may humbly and thankfully receive him in the grace and power of all his offices. Oh! grant, for thy mercy's sake, that as he is the only rest of our guilty consciences, the reliever of all our burdens, and has opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers, we may rejoice in his salvation, be faithful to his truth, commit our souls to him to be guided in the way which leadeth to everlasting life, and be received into thy kingdom of glory, through him, our blessed Saviour and Redeemer. *Amen.*

SECTION

SECTION LV.

EXPOSITION.

St. MATTHEW, Chap. xxiv. ver. 1.

HIS disciples came to shew him the buildings of the temple.—They supposed he would be as full of admiration at the beauty and stateliness of it as they were, and confirm them in their opinion of its duration. It was newly rebuilt, and yet near its final destruction. How blind is man in the things of futurity!

Ver. 2. There shall not be left one stone upon another. Which accordingly came to pass about thirty-nine years after, in the most remarkable destruction that ever befel any place or people.

Ver. 3. Tell us when shall these things be? And what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?—Whatever the disciples understood by these words, Christ knew how to give them an important meaning, and answers distinctly to the two parts of the question; making the one relate to his coming to the destruction of Jerusalem, the other to his coming to judgment. And these, with his help, we will endeavour to distinguish as we go along.

Ver. 4—8. And Jesus answered, &c.—We learn from history how exactly the several particulars

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here mentioned came to pass. See Hammond and Whitby, and especially Bishop Newton.

Ver. 4. Take heed that no man deceive you.—This concerned them more, as it does men at all times, than to be curious about knowing what will be hereafter.

Ver. 5. And shall deceive many.—But not those who have the true Christ by a true faith; they are proof against all imposture, 1 John ii. 20.

Ver. 6. See that ye be not troubled.—Then we need not be troubled, even in the worst of times. And we shall not, if we truly believe that all things work together for good to them that love God. How happy to be in such a state!

—But the end is not yet.—The final destruction of Jerusalem, and end of the Jewish Polity, which he is here speaking of.

Ver. 9. Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you.—As if you were the causes of all the miseries that are coming upon the earth. This was exactly verified in the heathen persecutions.

—And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake.—If thou art a Christian indeed, thou wilt have some of this hard measure even in a Christian country.

Ver. 12.

Ver. 12. And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.—Many, professing Christ, would be carried away with the general corruption, fall from the faith, desert and persecute their brethren. These two mutually produce and follow each other; the abounding of iniquity is the extinction of love, and in proportion as love decreases, iniquity abounds.

Ver. 13. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.—As the Christians were remarkably saved from the common destruction. But it is a warning to men at all times of the necessity of perseverance.

Ver. 14. And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world.—The preaching of the gospel in all the world, was then, and for some time after, a mystery to the disciples. But, doubtless, this saying would be remembered by them, and operate in its season for their full conviction in this point. Christ's seed may lie hid for a long time, and spring up at last. Sow it, thou whose concern it is, and leave the event to him.

—*For a testimony unto them.*—Of God's will to save them, if they receive it, and of their doom, if they reject it. You have had your call from it; let it not appear as a witness against you.

—*And then shall the end come.*—The end spoken of, *ver. 6.*

Ver. 15. When, therefore, ye shall see the abomination of desolation.—The desolating Roman army, abominable for its idol standards.

—Standing in the holy place.—Round about Jerusalem ; called the holy city.

—Who so readeth, let him understand.—So doubtless, he says to us, concerning all scripture. Not the outward meaning only, but spiritual intent, and saving sense of it. Would you know how ? Receive it as the word and will of God for your salvation, and pray it into your hearts. But, my friends, how can those understand who are able to read and do not ?

Ver. 17. Let him which is on the house top, not come down to take any thing out of his house.—Not having a moment to lose. Their houses were flat-roofed, with stairs on the outside.

Ver. 19. Wo unto them that are with child, &c.—As being more incapable than others of saving themselves by flight.

Ver. 20. Pray ye that your flight be not in the winter.—When they could not fly so fast as would be necessary.

—Neither on the sabbath-day.—When they were not allowed to go above two miles from home ; meaning, that in such a time of danger it would be necessary to take a much longer journey.

Ver. 21.

Ver. 21. For then shall be great tribulation, &c.—The miseries they underwent during the siege were exceeding great; and Josephus, who was present at it, says, that the number of the slain exceeded all that ever perished either by famine, plague, or sword, in any part of the world.

Ver. 22. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved.—All would be swept away in the common destruction. And those who were preserved from it, would, or might be saved eternally, by having longer time granted them to repent and believe.

—*But for the elect's sake, those days shall be shortened.*—Little does the world think that they are indebted to those whom they hate and persecute, for signal mercies.

Ver. 24. Inasmuch, that if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.—The meaning is, that they should not be deceived. And this shews the power of truth in them, and the great blessing of being established in it.

Ver. 27. For as the lightning cometh out of the east, &c. so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.—That is, general, and for a general destruction. It will be in vain to look out for a deliverer in this or that place.

Ver. 28. Wheresoever the carcase is, &c.—Wherever, and whenever, men are dead to God,
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and finally remain so, destruction will seize them, as the eagles and other birds of prey, fly to the carcase.

Ver. 29. Immediately after the tribulation of those days, &c.—The days of Christ, largely taken, and at the conclusion of them, shall the sun be darkened, &c. Just as St. Peter, after the Prophet Joel, under the words, *the last days*, comprehends the whole of Christ's œconomy, mentioning some remarkable particulars which should characterise the beginning, and others the end of it, *Acts* ii. 17—20. His last coming, therefore, is the subject spoken of from this verse to ver. 32. and is plainly distinguished from the destruction of Jerusalem, as being another event, and what was to come to pass *after* it.

—*The sun shall be darkened.*—You may trust Christ for the coming of this time. It was he who foretold the destruction of Jerusalem; and one event is the earnest and proof of the other.

Ver. 30. And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven.—If this sign is something distinct from himself, we cannot pretend to say what it will be.

—*And then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn.*—All, with fruitless, unavailing sorrow, and heart-rending anguish, who are not prepared for his coming.

Ver. 30.

Ver. 30. And they shall see the Son of man.—You and I, as surely as we now read this, either with joy or terror unspeakable.

Ver. 31. And they shall gather together his elect.—Us, if we have chosen the Redeemer, sinners as we are. And chosen to what? God's love, Christ's peace, the Spirit's power; to life, to heaven. Spring forward, heart, to meet the glorious, pleasing hope.

Ver. 33. When ye shall see all these things.—From verse the 5th to verse the 30th. For, at verse the 32d, he returns to the former subject of his coming to the destruction of Jerusalem; as he does again to the latter, of his coming to judgment at verse the 36th. And these two parts of the chapter, though intermixed, are kept so distinct as to be easily discernible from each other.

Ver. 34. This generation shall not pass, &c.—It is plain from hence that he is now speaking of his first coming; which as it was not above thirty-nine or forty years after, many of that generation might live to the time.

Ver. 35. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.—We know how dreadfully this was fulfilled in the case of the Jews; and in vain do we pretend to believe in Christ, if we can entertain a thought that his words will not be as exactly verified in the other
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part of the prediction relating to his coming to judgment.

Ver. 36. But of that day.—Spoken of in and from verse the 30th to verse 32d, and here plainly distinguished by its being called *that day*; that eminent, important day, to which all our other days ought to have a reference, as the lot of all mankind will then be finally determined to happiness or misery. Lord, keep it ever in our minds; and do thou come first in our hearts, that it may be a joyful day to us all.

—*Knoweth no man, no, not the angels in heaven, but my Father only.*—The precise time of Christ's coming to judgment was not unknown to him, but not to be revealed by him, *Acts i. 7.* And there will be no such previous warnings of it, as there were of the destruction of Jerusalem.

Ver. 37. But as the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.—It will find the generality as worldly, as unbelieving, and thoughtless of their eternal state as they were then.

Ver. 38. For as in the days that were before the flood, they were eating, &c.—Given up to earthly, sensual enjoyments, and thinking of nothing else. It is a vain pretence to say that these things are both allowable and necessary. We know it. But it is more necessary to enter into the depth here opened to us. The soul may be, the souls of many

many are, as dead to God, and all sense of true happiness, in the decent and reputable use of lawful comforts, as in a more profligate course of life.

Ver. 39. And knew not until, &c.—Nevertheless, the flood swept them all away. Observe this carefully, that you may not trust to the vain plea of wilful ignorance. It was then, as it is now with too many, in respect of gospel-salvation; they *would* not know; they despised Noah's preaching, and would take no warning.

Ver. 40. One shall be taken.—To God.

—*And the other left.*—Forsaken of God for ever! We need only weigh the difference to see the wisdom of true godliness.

Ver. 41. Two women shall be grinding.—Grinding was women's work, viz. with hand-mills.

Ver. 42. Watch, therefore, for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.—Or, which is the same thing, the day and hour of your death. That is the Lord's coming to every individual. But what is watching? Is it being in the faith of Christ, and walking according to his rule? Is it watching unto prayer and scripture-reading, and keeping your eyes steadily fixed upon the end of your lives? Look at yourselves, look all about you. Alas! how few are in such a state of watching!

Ver. 43. But know this, that if the good man of the house, &c. be would have watched.—So would you, for your bodies, or worldly goods, if you knew they were in danger. It is a melancholy consideration, and what our Lord is here lamenting, that men should be so much less concerned about their precious souls, which they know will be required of them, and that as the time will certainly come, so it may come before they are aware of it.

Ver. 44. Therefore be ye also ready.—Are you ready? If you are, how, and when did your preparation begin? Or is it still to begin?

Ver. 45—51. Who then is a faithful and wise servant, &c.—Mark with what concern he bespeaks our attention to what has been delivered in the chapter, knowing the doom of unfaithful servants, and how earnestly he desires we should all be wise managers of our trust; especially the apostles, and succeeding ministers, to whom the words are more particularly addressed.

Jesus, help us; and hear my prayer for you, and for myself. May he enable me to give you your portion of meat, even his own wholesome words and life-giving truths; and dispose you to receive them in the love thereof, as the nourishment of your souls; that when our Lord cometh, and findeth us so doing, he may pronounce us blessed, and present us to the Father washed in his

his blood, purified by his Spirit, and meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.

L E C T U R E.

BELIEF in Jesus, as the Son of God, and the Saviour of the world, is founded chiefly on the miracles he wrought, as the belief of his miracles is on the testimony of those who were eye-witnesses of them, and laid down their lives in confirmation of it. For the conclusion which Nicodemus drew from the miracles of Christ, is evident at once to the reason of mankind, that no man could do them except God was with him; neither can it be supposed that the men, on whose report they rest, were deceived, or deceivers, since they bore witness to what they saw themselves, endured the most painful labours, suffered the greatest hardships, and willingly offered themselves to death in testimony of what they knew to be truth. And I verily believe that many a soul would have been lost in its doubtings, and shrunk from the difficulties of Christ's religion, if it had not been supported with the evidence of his miracles, and constrained, in spite of all opposition, from carnal reasoning or worldly allurements, to submit to the force of it.

But there is one kind of miracles, namely, that of prophecy in this chapter, which deserves our particular notice, because it is perpetual, and speaks alike to men in every age. The miracles

which Christ wrought, during his abode upon earth, were seen and felt only by those who lived at that time; whereas a prophecy of something future, exactly fulfilled, still fulfilling, and always continuing, is a standing perpetual miracle, equally present and visible at all times, and brings the matter home to our senses. Such was his prophecy concerning the destruction of Jerusalem and dispersion of the Jews. Every thing came to pass within forty years exactly, as it was here foretold. Their city was besieged and taken by the Romans; those who escaped the slaughter were banished from their country, and they still continue scattered over the world, as so many living witnesses of Christ's divine fore-knowledge in this prophecy against them, proving, beyond the possibility of a doubt, that he was what he declared himself to be, the Son of the living God.

But with the prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem in this chapter, there is also interwoven a solemn declaration of another coming of the Son of man, in which we are all concerned, and one is the earnest and proof of the other. For as sure as Jerusalem was destroyed according to Christ's prediction, so surely will the world come to an end, and be followed by the general judgment of mankind; and that you might be established in this great article of our faith, this portion of scripture was written, and has now been read. The application of it in Christ's own words is still sounding in your ears, and I pray God it may be imprinted deeply in all our hearts, "watch, therefore,—be ye

ye also ready; for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come," or which is the same thing to every individual, the hour of your death. Take heed to yourselves that you do not lie down in your graves with the guilt of sin upon you. And, especially, beware how you entertain any such opinion of the harmlessness of sin, as if God might spare those in whom it is found, and it would not give them up to destruction of soul and body. This is a point in which mankind at all times are slow of belief. Notwithstanding the whole tenor of scripture, and the many plain declarations, warnings, and examples therein recorded of God's punishment of sin and sinners, they will not believe in him as he has revealed himself, but walk on still in darkness, and fancy him to be all mercy, in opposition to his justice. But take heed, O Christian, lest he also spare not thee, and lest a double portion of wo fall upon thee for the abuse of thy name and profession. For he changeth not, he is the same holy, sin-hating God for ever and ever; and there is a day coming which will be infinitely more dreadful to all the workers of iniquity than his wrath upon Jerusalem, great and terrible as it was. One is a forerunner, example, and proof of the other; the destruction of Jerusalem of the day of judgment *. And, accordingly, as I told you, one is here

* The publick is greatly indebted to Dr. Newton, the late Lord Bishop of Bristol, for his excellent dissertations on those particular prophecies, which have remarkably been fulfilled, and at this time are fulfilling in the world; in which he has stated the argument

here interwoven with the other, and both are set before our eyes at the same time, that we may know what God will do by what he has done, that being one great end for which all scripture was written; be in pain for ourselves; avoid the misery hanging over our heads; and be prepared by repentance and faith, to meet our Lord with joy at his second coming.

The P R A Y E R.

HOLY Lord God, who didst pronounce the sentence of death upon thy new-made creature, our first Father, and all his posterity, for sin; and deliver thy own people, the Jews, to destruction, when they had filled up the measure of their iniquities, by crucifying thy Christ, the Lord of glory; let these thy judgments, and all others which thou hast caused to be recorded in scripture for our admonition, convince us of the great evil and certain punishment of sin. Let thy word be assuredly believed by us, as the sacred

ment in favour of revelation thence arising, with great knowledge of history, precision, and force of reasoning. I hope I shall be indulged a liberty of dissent from his opinion, with regard to this chapter, as I suppose, with many others, that it does not relate solely to the destruction of Jerusalem, but, in part, to a future coming of Christ; whether in his millennial kingdom, or finally to judgment, or both, I do not presume to determine. His Lordship allows that the expression is sometimes too lofty to be understood only of the destruction of Jerusalem, and may, therefore, in a typical sense, be applied to the end of the world; but it seems to me that the two subjects are kept distinct, and that whenever one is spoken of, the other is not.

cred repository of all divine truth, the discovery of thy nature and will, and the only guide and light of our benighted souls. We have sinned ; we have done wickedly ; we have provoked thy displeasure by our manifold transgressions of thy law ; we have made the sentence of death our own every day of our lives ; and how then shall we be able to endure the severity of thy justice, or what can we plead for ourselves, when thou callest for the book of our hearts and lives ? Lord, we plead thy mercy, thy covenant, thy own Son. O Jesus, do thou answer for us, we commit our cause to thee ; do thou save us or we perish. Let thy Spirit speak the virtue of thy atoning blood to our affrighted consciences, and confirm us in the belief of thy all-sufficient sacrifice ; that when we revere the justice of our offended God, and tremble for our iniquities, we may adore his wisdom and bless his goodness, for making thee the propitiation for our sins, and saving us by a great deliverance. Lord, establish us in thy truth, confirmed to us by the miracles, and sealed with the blood of our great High Priest ; and grant that our faith may have its perfect work, in our love of thee, for the great love wherewith thou hast loved us, continuance in well-doing, and patient waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. *Amen.*

SECTION

SECTION LVI.

E X P O S I T I O N.

St. MATTHEW, Chap. xxv. ver. 1.

THEN *shall the kingdom of heaven.*—Christ's kingdom of grace, as to the different conditions of those who are in it, either intent upon securing the blessings of it to themselves, or, in the main, unconcerned about them; together with their being finally confirmed in it, or shut out of it for ever.

—Be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom.—The allusion is to the custom of the bridegroom's bringing his bride home in the night, and their friends going out to meet them with lamps.

Ver. 2. And five of them were wise.—For heaven. The scripture knows of no other wisdom, and was given to teach it. Do you neglect the means of attaining it, scripture-reading, and prayer for the Holy Ghost, to make it wisdom in your hearts? You have it not; your case is evident; you shut yourselves up in wilful blindness.

—And five foolish.—Not by down-right unbelief, or total neglect of religion, for they put themselves in company with those who went to meet the bridegroom; but contenting themselves with

with an outward profession, and sleeping over their work.

Ver. 3. They that were foolish, &c. took no oil.—The lamp you know must be fed. So must the spiritual life, by a constant use of all the means of grace. You see at once the folly of thinking you have that life, without a suitable care on your parts to preserve and maintain it.

Ver. 4. But the wise took oil.—And were therefore wise. The lamp is a profession of faith, and a holy life; and the oil which feeds it, is a lively faith, and a continual supply of the Spirit of grace, to be obtained by prayer and earnest seeking.

Ver. 5. While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept.—Either the wise, at times, as well as the foolish; or all in the sleep of death.

Ver. 6. And at midnight there was a cry.—The cry which is to awaken us all out of our sleep. Hear it now in the depth of your souls. He will, he will come!

Ver. 7. Then all those virgins arose, &c.—Observe, they are all represented to the last as intending to meet the bridegroom, but the foolish as not knowing how utterly they were unprovided for it. Examine, and make deep search into thyself. What art thou doing in the world, and what is uppermost in thy thoughts? Oh! Why

wilt thou live and die a deceived man, and expect to meet thy Lord as a friend at his coming, when thou art sunk into such a dead carelessness about it !

Ver. 8. Our lamps are gone out.—They had not faith kindled by the Spirit, and working by love, and their lamps were now gone out for ever. What a dreadful point of time !

Ver. 9. Lest there be not enough for us and you.—The meaning is, that they had barely enough for themselves ; and that if we have not oil of our own, all the world cannot help us to it.

—*But go ye rather to them that sell.*—Who are they ? None has this oil but Christ ; and he does not sell, but give. The price, if any, is self-emptiness and sense of misery. Go to him instantly. It may be too late to-morrow.

Ver. 10. And while they went to buy, &c.—And so were out of the way just at the critical time. He would not stay for their return ; it was their business to be ready for his coming.

—*And they that were ready, went in.*—Art thou ready ; a humble, faithful believer, and watching against that hour ? Blessed be he that came in the name of the Lord to make us ready, and is now speaking to us for that purpose.

—*And the door was shut.*—Never to be opened !

Ver. 11.

Ver. 11. Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us.—They were mistaken; he never had been their Lord, and he would not now. Behold the confidence of a lazy profession. Lord, open to us now. Discover us to ourselves; open thy kingdom of grace to us in all its privileges; and open our hearts to receive it, that we may experience all its blessed effects, and be received into thy kingdom of glory.

Ver. 12. I know you not.—Because they knew him not. Lord, Lord, is nothing to him, without a faith to prize his benefits, a heart to love him, and a will to be governed by him.

Ver. 13. Watch, therefore.—It is our Lord's own inference and conclusion from the whole. Ponder the word, and let it keep thy whole soul awake to the great business of thy everlasting interest in him.

—*For ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh.*—He cometh when death cometh; and you know not how soon that may open, or shut the door for ever.

L E C T U R E.

OUR Lord's design in this parable cannot be mistaken, he himself tells us what it is; it is to put all who are called by his name, and hope to be owned by him, upon watching and
 N 2 preparing

preparing for his coming. Every man's death is that time, the Lord's coming to *him*; and now mark what follows. If we have been looking and waiting for it; in faith, patience, and well-doing, he will take us to himself, we shall sit down at the marriage supper of the lamb; if we have sinned, or dozed away all our time, or lived only to ourselves and to the cares of the world, in ignorance or neglect of our great work under Christ, we shall be separated from him, and shut out of his kingdom for ever. I must ask you one question upon this, and may the Spirit of God come close to your hearts with it: Have you a serious thought and purpose of being ready? Then you have been convinced of sin, and of death for sin. You have seen the corruption and helplessness of your nature, and the misery of a natural state; then you have been made sensible of your want of a Redeemer, and of the all-sufficiency of Christ to save you; then you have been carefully enquiring what you must do to get an interest in him; then you have fled to him in the peril of your souls, as your only refuge from condemnation, and are now living unto him in all such ways as he directs, and you know to be necessary for securing your portion in him. You are diligent readers of scripture, to know what God has done for you, and to hear him speaking to you in it; you use prayer as for your lives; you attend constantly upon the publick worship of God, and the sacrament of the Lord's supper; you have regard to all God's commandments; you keep the one thing needful steadily in view; and

and when you think with yourselves what you would ask of God if you might have your wish, you can answer, and say at once, forgiveness of sins, peace with God through Jesus Christ our Lord, a heart to love him, and a will to obey him.

I have told you what you are, and will, and must be, if you are truly waiting for the coming of the Lord, in Christian faith, hope, and living; Christ will be your joy, his salvation your comfort in life and death, and St. Paul's question to him will be always uppermost in your thoughts, "Lord, What wouldest thou have me to do?" Let your consciences speak; let your hearts tell you whether it is so or not. Alas! I fear they will not. I must therefore speak; I must tell you the truth, whether you will hear it or not; I must be faithful to your souls. Indeed, my brethren, there is hardly the least appearance of any such knowledge, faith, or work among us, as I have briefly mentioned; generally speaking, no sense of sin, nor dread of a sinful state; no enquiring after Christ; no hunger and thirst for his blessings; no looking and longing for redemption by him, as if you were sold into slavery, and captives in a dungeon, as indeed you are, till he delivers you from your natural darkness, from the curse of sin, from all your spiritual enemies; no submission to the authority of the Most High God, nor solemn purpose of obedience; no shew of religion, except coming to church on Sundays, and that in very many not constantly, and the coming
now

now and then of a few to the sacrament. What, my friends? Is this all? Is this believing to the saving of the soul? Is this having oil in your lamps? Is this watching for the coming of your Lord? Is this being ready? Will you abide by this poor form of an empty profession, and rest your eternal hopes upon it? Know your mistake; know your blindness; know your unbelief, and want of conversion; consider, and be instructed from what you have heard to-day.

The foolish virgins put themselves in company with those who waited for the bridegroom, and expected to enter in with them to the marriage; but being unprovided of oil in their lamps, had the door shut upon them, and were rejected for ever with those heart-breaking words, "I know you not." What now will you say to this, and what is your condition this hour, if you have nothing to alledge for yourselves, nothing to plead for your admission into heaven, but your baptism and Christian name? I say again, the foolish virgins were seekers; they pretended to be in the way to the kingdom of heaven; they had a form or appearance of religion, and came boldly to the door with these words in their mouths, "Lord, Lord, open to us;" but, alas! it was too late; it was in vain; hear it once more, a name, a form, a profession of religion only, is not seeking truly, and according to the mind of Christ; nor will any such, whatever they may think of themselves, have the door opened to them. The Lord make you know and feel in your hearts what the truth

truth of conversion is ; that coming to him in repentance and faith, cleaving to him in all holy obedience, and desiring nothing so much as to grow in grace, and in the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, you may be received and welcomed by him as his faithful servants in the day of his coming.

The P R A Y E R.

BLESSED GOD, who hast caused the light of the gospel to shine unto us, and received us into thy kingdom of grace, as the way to thy everlasting kingdom of glory in heaven ; grant that we, receiving the Lord Jesus Christ into our hearts by faith, may give all diligence to make our calling and election sure, by gladly submitting to his teaching and authority, and walking in the Spirit. Let thy love be a holy fire in our souls, and do thou keep it burning day and night with continual supplies of thy grace. Keep us ever mindful of that time when we shall lie down in the dust, and be sealed up in our graves to the coming of our Lord ; and of thy great mercy teach us the heavenly wisdom of making our lives a continual preparation for it. Let thy word be ever before us as our guide ; do thou bless it to us, and deliver us from the wretched deceit of thinking that we are in the way to eternal life, when we neglect the means of attaining it. Call powerfully to those who are lying in the dead sleep of a sinful, careless, or worldly life ;

stir

stir up thy children to greater degrees of watchfulness and fidelity, and seal the instruction we have now heard to all our hearts, that we may not be surprized with the midnight cry, and found without oil in our lamps. When we hear those awakening, awful words, Behold! the bridegroom, the Lord cometh; let our souls answer, Come Lord Jesus, come now; as thou hast purged our sins, and redeemed us by thy death, come and live in us; be thou our Lord and Governor, take possession of us by thy Spirit, make us thine in faith and purity here, thine for ever in the glory and blessedness of thy kingdom. We know not the hour of thy coming; we know thou wilt come; we know thou camest into the world with bowels of pity to make us ready for thee; forbid it, Lord, that our knowledge of thee, and of our great work under thee, should lie dead upon our hands, or that thou shouldest say to any of us in that day, I know you not. God be merciful to us and help us; that, being cleansed from all our sins, and keeping our eyes steadily fixed on the one thing needful, we may be found of thee in peace, and received to thy mercy in Jesus Christ, our blessed and only Saviour. *Amen.*

SECTION

SECTION LVII.

EXPOSITION.

St. MATTHEW, Chap. xxv. ver. 14.

WHO called his own servants.—It is of the utmost importance to us, to bear it continually upon our hearts, that we are all the servants of the Most High God, have our daily task assigned us, and are accountable to him for our fidelity. Not knowing, or not sufficiently attending to this, is the great blindness and sin of the world.

Ver. 15. To every man according to his several ability.—Consider what is before you. Know your own work, and keep your thoughts bent to it. Look not at those who are higher in grace or abilities, to be discouraged, but to imitate them; nor at those who are lower, to nourish pride, but to be thankful, and double your diligence.

Ver. 16. Went and traded with the same.—You know what trading is, and that those who would be successful in it, must be sober and diligent, and keep their thoughts close to it day by day. Are you thus trading for the greatest of all gains? Can you think of one day in your life, one sabbath, that was ever so employed for heaven?

Ver. 18. He that had received one, &c.—He that had the least work to do, was the only one of the

three that made a difficulty of it. God, who knew this man's heart, would not entrust him with five or two talents, to increase his condemnation, but could not dispense with his doing nothing.

Ver. 19. After a long time, the Lord of those servants cometh.—This is said to assure us of the certainty of his coming, and that whether it is sooner or later, we may not make a handle of it for being slothful.

—*And reckoneth with them.*—He has his eye upon what we are doing, though we think him absent, and *his* accounts, when he comes, will be very exact. Suppose it should be to-morrow, what account have *you* kept? Would you say, as you do now, that you have done what lay in your power? For the love of God, let the thought of this reckoning bring you to Christ without delay, to cleanse and heal you, and put you upon a new work of careful preparation for that time. And whoever you are, never forget that you are servants.

Ver. 21. Well done, thou good and faithful servant. O sweetest of all sounds! This it is that supports, and enlivens the faithful soul in all its labours and conflicts.

Ver. 24. I knew thee that thou art an hard man.—Horrid blasphemy! and yet it lies lurking at the heart—God's work is hard—Surely he will not exact

exact it strictly of us. But the parable says he will; and believing, or not believing it from Christ's mouth, gives us up to heaven or hell. Men's thoughts of God are generally according to their dispositions. A wicked, slothful man, is averse to the belief of a just, pure, holy God. And from hence it comes to pass, that the revelation he has made of himself is disregarded by some, and rejected by others.

Ver. 24. Reaping where thou hast not sown.—Oh! not so. All we have is of his own giving and blessing; and if he has not a full harvest from us, it is because we do not look to him for it, but set bounds to his power.

Ver. 25. And I was afraid.—His fear wrought just the wrong way, it should have put him upon action. This shews to what miserable shifts we are driven, to excuse ourselves for not doing God's work.

—Lo, there thou hast that is thine.—Indeed he had not. If you were to put seed into the hands of a servant, under a strict charge and obligation to sow it, and look well to the growth of it, you would not think it enough to have the seed returned unsown.

Ver. 26. Thou wicked and slothful servant.—Wicked, in God's account, because slothful. He had done no harm, but then he had done nothing. And how slothful! not to be full of concern, for

the recovery of the soul, for growth in grace, for Christ, and all his blessings.

Ver. 27. Thou oughtest, therefore, &c.—Hear this; thou oughtest; it is thy duty; this will be strictly required of thee. God has appointed thee a work, and whatever thou art, whatever else thou art doing in the world, it must not be neglected; his talent must not rust in thy hands.

Ver. 29. For unto every one that hath.—By diligence in improving.

—That hath not.—Does not value, and improve what he has received.

Ver. 30. And cast ye the unprofitable servant.—Now stand forth with your hopes and pretensions, you who are in a thoughtless, dozing, inactive state, with respect to God and religion. Behold, your condition is damnable, and if you die in it, will consign you to outer darkness, weeping and gnashing of teeth.

L E C T U R E.

MY brethren, you have heard our Lord's doom upon the unprofitable, slothful servant. Are there no souls here in this condition? Ignorant of their great work and business in the world, and unconcerned about it; and, therefore, ignorant, because they are unconcerned. I fear there

there are many, very many such in this, and all other places; thinking and calling themselves Christians, and expecting to be owned by Christ as his disciples, who never thought once in their whole lives what it is to be so, and have not so much as a Christian appearance. Would to God that, upon hearing this awakening passage of scripture, and the sentence which was passed upon the slothful servant, you might say to yourselves, one by one, Lord, is it I? Is this my case? Am I thus thoughtless about my soul, as regardless of my spiritual, everlasting interest, as this man was; and if I die in this condition, as sure to have the same sentence pronounced upon me? Will the Lord surely come to reckon with me, and do I never think of that time, nor take any care to have my accounts in readiness for him? Do but once say this truly, and with godly fear for yourselves, and all may yet be well; it will be a happy entrance upon your great work, and God is with you in every step of it, and will enable you to bring it to perfection. But instead of this, What do you do? You put all such thoughts from you day after day, and year after year, thinking and saying that you do no harm, and that you live quietly and honestly in the world. Now if this was true, as generally speaking it is not, what is it at the best, but owning and declaring that you have no weighty sense upon your minds, of the necessity of caring for the soul, but are hiding your talent in the earth, and doing just nothing at all? You say again, that you have other business upon your hands which must be minded.

minded. What ! Do you mean in the first place,
 and to the neglect of your salvation, of Christ's
 work, of eternity ? Do you not see at once that
 you are in the darkness of unbelief, and con-
 demned out of your own mouths ? You will say
 farther, Must we be always poring upon our
 hearts ; always thinking of God and heaven ; al-
 ways upon our knees ? Indeed, my brethren, you
 would often think of these things when you do
 not, be often at prayer when you are not, if you
 knew and believed how greatly it concerns you to
 live in the faith of Christ and the fear of God,
 and to go to heaven when you die. Some too, I
 hear saying, that they have as good hearts as the
 best, or that they do what lies in their power,
 though it is evident to all the world that they
 are careless and unawakened, and have no man-
 ner of concern about their salvation. But away
 with such vain excuses ; the portion of scripture
 which you have now heard lies full against them
 all ; Christ will admit of none of them.

If, when nothing else will do, you should sup-
 pose that you have an eye to your great work
 under Christ, and are not unmindful of your
 souls, let me tell you, in few words, what that
 work is, and if you are seriously engaged in it,
 how you will be carrying it on. Your work is
 recovery from a state of sin and condemnation, to
 a sense of God's peace, and a will to please him
 in all well-doing. This, I say, is your work ;
 and if you really believed it, believed that your
 life, your soul, your hope of seeing the face of
 God

God in heaven, your everlasting happiness or misery depended upon it, What would you do, and how would you be carrying it on? You would not be ignorant of it; you would read the scripture diligently, to know as exactly as you can what it is; you would be in a state of prayer for a blessing upon your souls; you would attend constantly upon the worship of God in this place, and set it up in your families; you would come to the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper as often as you have opportunity; you would spend no sabbaths in a thoughtless idleness; I say, you would use the means which God has appointed for your growth in grace, and all conscientiously for this end, that you might be partakers of the salvation which is in Christ Jesus, glorify God for his mercy, live to him in obedience, and in the joyful expectation of hearing those blessed words from the mouth of your Lord, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant." This then is your touchstone, and here you must not trifle upon the peril of your souls. Ignorance, sloth, hiding your talent, doing nothing, is unbelief, and will as certainly give you up to condemnation as downright wickedness. If, therefore, you would be approved of Christ, you must know your work under him, and apply yourselves to the discharge of it with that diligence, care, and fidelity, which he requires of you. Nothing else is conversion; and nothing else that you can plead for yourselves will stand you in any stead at the great day of accounts. If you would be Christians indeed, you must first believe what Christ has done for you,
and

and in that faith live unto him according to the rule he has given you, and have nothing so much at heart as to be prepared for his coming.

The P R A Y E R.

BLESSED LORD, thou hast made and redeemed us to glorify thee by our willing obedience, and yield ourselves in all things to thy disposal. Thou hast appointed us our work; and, when we were lost to the sense of it, living only to our own will and pleasure, in the lusts of the flesh, or the cares of this life, thou didst send thy Son to bring it to our remembrance; to make reconciliation for our past neglect of it; to quicken us to a suitable diligence in it; to assist us in the performance of it; and whatever we do as unto thee, in truth and sincerity, thou promisest, for his sake, graciously to accept and reward it. Enable us, O Lord, to make deep search into ourselves, to consider and examine what knowledge we have of our great work, what progress we have made in it, whether we desire, above all things, to see it prosper in our hands, and are looking up continually to thee for a blessing upon it. Let thy word, which we have heard this day, be as fire searching our inward parts; that being convinced of our ignorance, sloth, and spiritual deadness, we may, from henceforth, redeem the time, be careful to use the talents which thou hast committed to us to thy glory, labour earnestly for our souls, receive directions from thee in what way

way our pains will be successful, and resolve, in the power of thy Spirit, to put them in practice. The book of knowledge is in our hands; it tells us of our fall, sin, and danger, and of a wonderful work of mercy and redemption, and thy grace is promised to make it light and strength in our hearts. Great, O Lord, is thy goodness to us, in thy calls and warnings, in the gift of thy Son, in the offer of thy Spirit, in the hope of eternal life which thou hast set before us. Suffer us not to neglect such means of deliverance and salvation; but grant, for thy mercy's sake, that, being washed in the blood of the everlasting covenant, renewed by thy grace, and waiting for the coming of our Lord, we may enter into the joy which thou hast prepared for all thy faithful servants in Christ Jesus, our blessed and only Saviour. *Amen.*

SECTION LVIII.

EXPOSITION.

St. MATTHEW, Chap. xxv. ver. 31.

WHEN the Son of man shall come in his glory, &c.

He is a Christian who makes this awful time present to himself, lives continually under a sense of it, and is in a state of diligent preparation for it according to the mind of Christ.

Ver. 32. He shall separate them.—According to their own choice, and separation of themselves *now.*

Ver. 34. Inherit the kingdom prepared for you.—For none but the faithful; and for them only by the grace and love of God.

Ver. 35, 36. For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat, &c.—Confessed, relieved me in my distressed, suffering, persecuted members, and proved your faith by its effects.

Ver. 37, 38, 39. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when, &c.—Thinking themselves unworthy, having kept no register of their good deeds, knowing the imperfection of them, and their reward to be of grace, and far beyond their desert.

Ver. 41. Depart from me, ye cursed.—Having departed first from him. His heaven, if he could bestow it upon them, his presence, his service, his attendants, would be as much their aversion then, as they are now. All such may conceive something of the unhappy state they are in, and the curse they are under at present, by considering that heaven itself would be a curse to them.

Ver. 44. Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when, &c.—With astonishing blindness they wondered to the last to be charged with any neglect of, or disregard to, him. And we are here plainly given to understand, 1. That many live and die in utter ignorance of themselves. 2. That faith worketh by love. And 3. That where

where there is no lively working for Christ's sake, there is no faith.

Ver. 46. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal.—It is dangerous presumption, to say that the words everlasting and eternal, as applied to life or punishment, have different meanings, when the original word is the same.

From this whole passage it is alledged, that Christ, in the most decisive manner, lays the salvation of men upon their works. To affirm that they will not be rewarded according to their works, would certainly be great ignorance of scripture. But then those works must either be absolutely perfect in themselves, to merit a reward, or be washed in the blood of Christ, and only good as springing from a root of faith in, and love to, him, which are evidently supposed to be the ground of the works here mentioned; And who then will abide by the former plea? Lord, it is of thy grace that we do any thing that is good, and of thy mercy that we are accepted. Purify our hearts by faith, that, in the sense of thy undeserved goodness to us, we may abound in acts of mercy to all men, especially to them that are of the household of faith; and inherit the kingdom prepared from the foundation of the world, for all that unfeignedly love thee in Jesus Christ,

L E C T U R E.

WE may consider this twenty-fifth chapter of St. Matthew as one of our Lord's last legacies to the world, it being delivered by him but three days before his death. I say, for this reason, if for no other, we may suppose it contains matter of great importance to us, calls for our most serious attention, and requires to be well understood and laid to heart. In the parable of the ten virgins, he warns us of the necessity of watching and being ready for his coming, or, which is the same thing to every one of us, the hour of death; and that if we are not, we must not expect to enter in with him to the marriage; the door will be shut upon us for ever. What does the diligent, conscientious, Christian reader of scripture say to this? Am I watching for the coming of my Lord? Is it my desire, endeavour, and earnest prayer to keep the lamp of a pure heart and a holy life always burning, and to have it fed with a lively faith, and a continual supply of the Spirit of grace?

In the parable of the slothful servant, he sounds an alarm to those who think well of their condition, though the work he has appointed them lies dead upon their hands, and they have no proof to give of any true concern for their souls. What says the man, who desires to profit by what he hears, is this my case? Do I know nothing, believe nothing, do nothing? Do I pass all my time in a dozing, dreaming condition,
never

never considering what Christ has done for me, nor what he expects from me? If I do, I am here told my doom; and when God comes to reckon with me, shall as surely be pronounced wicked, as this man was, who hid his Lord's talent in the earth, and be given up to weeping and gnashing of teeth for ever. My brethren, I beg of you to understand; though we are not openly wicked, though in the main we are good-natured and inoffensive, prudent and civil, and have some form of religion, it may be only a natural state; and no account will be made of all this, if we are unawakened to a sense of our condition, ignorant of our danger and misery in sin, were never inwardly stirred up to seek after Christ as our only remedy, and, therefore, strangers to the life and power of religion, remiss and slothful in the great and necessary work of our salvation. God will say of all such, whatever else they may have been doing in the world, whatever they think of themselves, "Take from him that he hath" given him to make use of, and he would not; he hath not done the work I appointed him to do; "cast the unprofitable servant into outer darkness."

And lastly, to give the greater weight to these two parables, as well as to all his foregoing instructions, and that what he had delivered in the course of his ministry might make a deep and lasting impression upon our minds, he concludes his teaching with opening to us the process of the day of judgment, and setting it as it were before our eyes. You have had it now read to you;
and

and if you have heard it with any degree of attention, cannot but perceive that our examination, at the last day, will turn upon what we have done, and what fruits our faith has produced. God be thanked, we shall not then, if Christians, be questioned whether we have kept the whole law, from the beginning to the end of our lives, without spot of sin, or the least failure in our obedience; for so we must all be given up to condemnation. God be thanked, he who is to be our judge is also the Son of man, has a feeling of our infirmities, took our nature upon him, that in it he might take away the sin of it, and be made the Lord our righteousness; for there never was that man born of Adam, who can stand in judgment before God, without an interest in his precious blood-shedding, all-sufficient merits, and perfect righteousness. God be thanked that we are next to hear of Christ crucified. God be thanked and praised for ever for this blessed gospel-relief, and most comfortable truth of scripture, that by grace we are saved through faith, and have peace with God through Jesus Christ our Lord. But nevertheless, the faith which saves us, worketh by love, keepeth the commandments, and maketh us new creatures; and if our faith hath not its proper fruit and natural operation, it proves itself at once to be dead faith, that is, nothing but pretence and self-deceit. And for this reason, though our works, as being imperfect, cannot be pronounced of God what they are not, and, therefore, of themselves cannot save us, yet, we are told, the principal enquiry will be concerning

concerning them, as they are the only evidence we can have to give of our sincerity with Christ, and of the truth and soundness of our faith.

And that Christ here speaks only of believers, and of their works done to believers, in faith, and for his sake, not as the ground, or meritorious cause of their reward, but as the fruit and proof of their love to him for the great salvation he has wrought for them, is evident. 1. Because faith is the right Christian principle of action, distinguisheth a Christian from all other men, and whatever proceeds from it is therefore accounted by Christ as done to himself. 2. Because the persons here spoken to are represented as retaining to the last a sense of their unworthiness, and as it were disclaiming all title to the glory now in their view, for any thing they had done. This is the true character of believers, who, as sure as they are such, and know how they are saved, make no reckoning of their works and services. Whereas those on the left hand, blind to the last, boldly advance their pretensions to favour, and seem surprised to have it laid to their charge, that they had left any thing undone. 3. It can hardly be supposed that Christ calls any but believers his brethren; surely not those whom he pronounces accursed. And, therefore, the works on which he sets so great a value, are not indiscriminately those of liberality, or bounty to the poor, how great soever; but only acts of kindness flowing from dear respect to him, and the charity of relieving and comforting his needy, suffering, persecuted members, as such,

and

and because they belong to him. It is not hereby intended to discountenance the exercise of beneficence, from whatever motive it may proceed, nor confine it to those of the household of faith, if they could certainly be known. Doing good for Christ's sake is not only the truest, but the most extensive principle of action, takes in all mankind, and is great in his account, whoever is the object of it. But, nevertheless, the kindness shewed to believers under that denomination, and owning Christ and his truth in them, though with cost and danger, as being the visible effect, and sure evidence of a lively faith, is that which, in a more especial manner, is here proposed to our imitation.

What now does the awakened soul say upon the whole, knowing, from our Lord's own mouth, that the awful time will come, and that every man's sentence will be according to what he hath done? He says at once, What is all the world to my interest and concern in that great day? God forbid that I should be unmindful of it, and neglect my preparation for it; and may the God of all grace bless this warning to me which I have now heard, and seal the instruction to my heart. Do you not hear this warning and instruction? Are these solemn words lightly regarded by you, and will you still go on careless and unawakened, without ever remembering that God will bring you to judgment? You should tremble to think of your condition. If what you have heard is true, what will become of you? Hear it again,
and

and the Lord strike it deep into all your souls this day—"depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." And know for certain that the scripture cannot be broken; God is not a man that he should lie; Christ did not say what he never intended to make good; "these," all who appear before Christ without a living, working faith, "shall go away into everlasting punishment." Speak, Lord, thy own words with thy own power; for though we know and believe them to be thine, we shall hear them in vain, without the operation of the Holy Ghost. Blessed Spirit, reveal them to our hearts. And for this let us all pray.

The P R A Y E R.

ALMIGHTY GOD, whose blessed Son was manifested that he might destroy the works of the devil, and make us the sons of God and heirs of everlasting life; grant us, we beseech thee, that having this hope, we may purify ourselves as he is pure; that when he shall appear again with power and great glory, we may be made like unto him in his eternal and glorious kingdom. Let that day be ever present to our minds, when we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, to give account of the things done in the body, and receive according to that we have done, whether it be good or bad. We are bound to thank thee for the warning thou hast given us of it; for the method thou hast taken

to prepare us for it in Jesus Christ ; for the gift of thy Spirit to quicken us to a lively expectation of it, and conduct us happily to it through all the dangers and temptations of this mortal life. Let thy word, which we have heard this day, be assuredly believed by us, that renouncing the devil, the world, and the flesh, according to our vow in baptism, we may separate ourselves to Christ now in will and desire, despise every thing in comparison of our portion in him, and be confirmed in all well-doing, by meditating continually on the glory and blessedness of being owned by him as his faithful servants. Lord, it is of thy grace that we do any thing that is good, and of thy mercy that we are accepted. Purify our hearts by faith, that in the sense of thy undeserved goodness to us we may abound in acts of mercy to all men, especially to them that are of the household of faith, and may inherit the kingdom prepared from the foundation of the world, for all that unfeignedly love thee in Jesus Christ, our hope, our blessed Redeemer and only Saviour. *Amen and Amen.*

SECTION

SECTION LIX.

E X P O S I T I O N.

St. MATTHEW, Chap. xxvi. ver. 1.

The fourth day of the Holy Week.

Mark xiv. 1--11. Luke xxii. 1--6. John xiii. 1--30.

WHEN *Jesus had finished all these sayings.*—

Either what he had to declare in the course of his ministry, or since his last coming to Jerusalem.

Ver. 2. And the Son of man is betrayed to be crucified.—A death inflicted only on slaves, and the worst of malefactors. Mark with what ease and calmness he speaks of it, knowing that for this end he came into the world. Nevertheless, there was one thing, and but one in all nature, that could put his fortitude to the trial, as you will find in this chapter and the next.

Ver. 5. But they said, not on the feast, &c.—Nay, but it must be then, in spite of their subtilty, that the true Paschal Lamb might be offered on the Paschal feast; and the same will of God, which delivered him into their hands, appointed also the time.

Ver. 7. There came unto him a woman, having an alabaster box of very precious ointment, &c.—The most precious thing she had, or could think of,

to shew respect to Christ. There are two other instances of the same kind recorded besides this, *Luke vii. John xii.* and all of women. The tender passions, in which they excel, exert themselves with equal force when they are sanctified by grace.

Ver. 8. His disciples had indignation.—St. Mark also says, *some* had indignation; which shews it to be a different action at a different time, from that, *John xii.* where Judas only is mentioned as finding fault, together with the reason of it, viz. because he was a thief. But that censure did not belong to the other disciples, and therefore it is omitted here.

—*To what purpose is this waste?*—They were not capable at this time of entering into the spirit and temper with which the action was performed. So we, with our cold hearts, may be too apt to censure what Christ highly approves.

Ver. 10. For she hath wrought a good work upon me.—Let us all think how we may give him occasion to say of us, that we have wrought a good work upon him. He will set a high value on a single word spoken for him.

Ver. 11. But me ye have not always.—Notwithstanding, he has told us in the foregoing chapter in what sense we have, and must have, *him* always with us.

Ver. 12.

Ver. 12. She did it for my burial.—This was a word to the disciples. They thought not of his death, and much less that it was so near at hand.

Ver. 13. Verily I say unto you, wheresoever, &c.—Great was her faith and love; and Christ would have the memory of the action preserved for our sakes, and to shew how well pleased he is with the open expression of our love to him. Thou wilt not grudge to be at some cost for him, if thou hast ability. Thy heart may be this box of precious ointment, if thou hast no more.

Ver. 14. Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went, &c.—You verily think you abhor Judas and his treachery, and that you would not have sold Christ for the world. But remember every sinner sells him over and over again, and many times for much less than thirty pieces of silver.

Ver. 15. For thirty pieces of silver.—The price of a servant, *Exod. xxi. 32.* Canst thou be so undervalued?

LECTURE.

WHEN the soul is awakened to a sense of its condition, sees its own sin, and the damnable-ness of all sin, in the light of scripture, and by conviction from the Spirit of God, it bestirs itself amain for deliverance, and looks out every way for help. Its great enquiry will then be, What must I do to be saved? What shall reconcile

tile me to a just and justly-offended God ? What
 can raise me to a state of hope and comfort, and
 settle me upon a firm foundation of rest and
 peace ? Blessed be God, we have the answer here
 before us in the account of Christ's sufferings,
 crucifixion, and resurrection from the dead, re-
 corded in the three last chapters of this gospel ;
 and what we were told in the beginning of it,
 that his name was " called Jesus, because he
 should save his people from their sins," is now
 fully opened to us. His death was the salvation
 there spoken of, the concluding act of his obe-
 dience for man, the accomplishment of the work
 which the Father gave him to do, our discharge
 from the guilt of sin, deliverance, redemption,
 and restoration to the favour of God. To this
 you are now to turn your attention ; and I pray
 God fix your eyes and hearts on Christ crucified.
 In the course of this gospel you have heard of
 many of his miracles ; to the end you might see
 your help in him, and commit your souls to him,
 in full assurance that " he is able to save, to the
 uttermost, all that come unto God by him." But
 the great miracle is still to come, the miracle of
 his cross, the wonder of his love, his obedience
 unto death. He healed the bodies of men, cured
 all manner of diseases, and raised the dead to life,
 with a word speaking ; but to bring relief to the
 soul, and save a perishing world, he must die him-
 self. He did die ; " he was delivered for our of-
 fences ;" he was made a sacrifice of atonement for
 us ; he would endure the vengeance, and satisfy
 the justice of God at any rate ; he took our pu-
 nishment

nishment upon himself, and bore our sins in his own body, to deliver us from wrath, and save us from the eternal curse of them. "Behold, therefore, the lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." Know what it is that makes you Christians and Believers; understand the nature and particular manner of your redemption by Christ; consider well the great point on which your salvation turns, and what is to be the refuge and stay of your souls against the damnation of sin. It is not that Christ makes us our own Saviours in whole, or in part; it is not that he gives us power of ourselves to undo the accursed effects of sin, and become the sons of God, by any will, work, or holiness of our own. He will enable us to do great things, recover us to a state of pure obedience, and make our faith the principle of turning our hearts, and kindling our love to God. But this is not to be the soul's rest in the day of its trouble for sin. I beseech you, hear me; it is in looking to Jesus, as the Israelites were directed to look upon the brazen serpent for a cure when they were stung with serpents; it is in believing against all our guilt, and all our fears, that God laid on Christ the iniquities of us all, and that if we lay them upon his head in repentance and faith, they will never be imputed to us; and I should be a preacher of lies, false to my office, false to your souls, and to that doctrine which is the glory of all scripture, if I did not take occasion, from this portion of it, to remind you that we have pardon and peace with God, righteousness and life, by the death and

finished

finished work of Christ ; and to warn you against trusting in yourselves, when you have done all you can, and the very best you ever will do, or making any thing but Christ and his righteousness the ground of your everlasting hopes. You may know many things ; you may do many things in religion ; you may grieve for your sin, and be burthened with it, and in earnest striving against it ; but if it is to be clean in your own eyes ; if it is to make your peace with God, and put your own repentance, or endeavours, or prayers, or sincerity, in the place of Christ ; if you lay any other foundation of your pardon and acceptance than Christ crucified, and have not the happy skill to keep what he has done and suffered for you always separate in your minds from any thing that you do yourselves, you are not believers ; you make Christ of no effect ; you set up another gospel in opposition to him. But know for certain that there is not another ; there are not two gospels or methods of salvation ; there is but one atonement for sin, and one way for any to be made partakers of it, which is, faith in the mercy of God appointing and declaring it as our remedy, with a penitent acknowledgement of our guilt, and utter inability to help ourselves. O man, O sinner, “ believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved ; ” and that thou mayest believe, be humble. Do not think so highly of thyself, as that thou canst answer thy Maker when he brings thee to judgment ; nor so lightly of thy sin, as that it could be purged with any less sacrifice than the blood of the Son of God. But
do

do not stop here ; apply it to thy own soul ; believe that it was shed for thee, and that though thy sins are ever so many and great, yet, when they are seen and repented of, it is of sufficient value to outweigh them all, and accepted of God for thy eternal justification. This, as far as I know and believe, is the gospel of our peace, and the will of God for the salvation of a guilty world ; and I am bold to speak it to you, on the authority of an inspired apostle, that “ Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures,” *1 Cor. xv. 3.* The Lord speak the word of his grace to your hearts, that in the joy of it you may live unto him that died for you ; always remembering what you heard at the conclusion of the last chapter, that whatever you do for Christ’s sake will be remembered by him when he comes to judgment ; and the proof of your faith, in a work of love and obedience, proclaimed before men and angels, to your unspeakable and everlasting comfort.

The P R A Y E R.

ALMIGHTY GOD, who gavest thy only begotten Son to die for our sins, and to rise again for our justification, we beseech thee to keep us stedfast in this faith. Make us know and feel that there is no other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved ; no atonement for sin but his death ; no way or means for sinful mankind to be purged from their guilt, and restored to the hope of thy favour, but by

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his meritorious blood-shedding. Deliver us from all pride and hypocrisy, from all blindness and hardness of heart; that, acknowledging our vileness and misery, we may thankfully embrace the offer of thy mercy, adore thy goodness, and rejoice in thy salvation. Let thy peace, which passeth all understanding, keep our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus; and grant that for his sake, and in the sense of thy love, we may devote ourselves to thy service, abound in all good works, and be accepted through him, our only Mediator and advocate. *Amen.*

SECTION LX.

EXPOSITION.

St. MATTHEW, Chap. xxvi. ver. 17.

The fifth day.

Mark xiv. 12—72. Luke xxii. 7—71. John xiii. 31—38. xiv. xv. xvi. xvii. xviii. 1—27.

WHERE wilt thou that we prepare?—Lord, we know that we must prepare for thee in our hearts. Prepare them for thyself.

Ver. 18. My time is at hand.—He came into the world for this time, and came to it with infinite love and compassion for thee, that thou mightest say, with the same cheerfulness and resignation at the hour of death, my time is at hand.

Ver. 18.

Ver. 18. I will keep the passover at thy house.— Would you think it an honour, and be glad to entertain Jesus? He offers it to every soul. Hear his voice, and open the door, and behold he comes, *Rev. iii. 20. John xiv. 23.*

Ver. 22. And they were exceeding sorry.— If we heard Christ saying, One of you is my deadly enemy, would it not strike cold to our hearts, and put us upon saying, one by one, Wo is me, is it I!

Ver. 24. It had been good for that man, if he had not been born.— Mark it for your own use and instruction. Judas's guilt was of an extraordinary kind, but the words are spoken of all hardened, impenitent sinners. Tho' thou dippest thy hand with him in the dish, hast been baptized in his name, called thyself his disciple, and eaten at his table, they may be spoken of thee. Turn back to the last chapter.

Ver. 25. Thou hast said.— It may seem almost impossible that Judas should have persisted in his design, after being so plainly told of it, and the conviction he had thereby of Jesus's being privy to his thoughts. Nevertheless, so did Peter, though a much better man, sin against warning; and this knowledge and belief in us, does not restrain us, in various instances, from sinning against him.

Ver. 26. This is my body.—Represents my body. broken; and eating it, is, in effect, eating my body, and thereby having communion with, and life by me. O! taste and see how gracious the Lord is. Turn the eye of thy soul this way. Admire this great, crowning work of the Saviour, in which he has contrived and appointed the means of changing our souls into his own nature, in the same manner as our bodies are nourished by, and have the nature of, that which they feed upon; but with this difference, that in corporal eating, the body changes the food into its own substance, and in this spiritual eating we are changed into the nature of the food. O Jesus, wonderful in thy love, the giver and the gift, increase our faith in thee; give us a hunger and thirst for thee; give us thyself, or we die.

Ver. 27. Drink ye all of it.—You, and all others, that are my disciples to the world's end. You, who hear this. These are Christ's words to you.

Ver. 28. For this is my blood of the New Testament.—By which it is purchased, sealed, and ratified. Testament and covenant, both: Testament, as we are confirmed by it in a state of sonship, and as conveying our inheritance to us: Covenant, as it is a declaration of the means, by which that inheritance is to be secured.

—Which is shed for many.—For many effectually, when seen and trusted in as the blood of atonement.

Ver. 28.

Ver. 28. For the remission of sins.—This is properly gospel-comfort, and life from the dead to a soul awakened to a sense of sin. Blessed be God!

Ver. 29. Until that day, when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.—Who can tell what that new wine will be? Not the delights of sense; though the senses are here made our instructors, to give us some faint conception of the joys of heaven. The expression of “drinking it new” seems to be taken from the festivity and rejoicing at the time of the vintage. But observe, he says “with you.” What a sweet meditation it is, whenever you partake of the sacrament of his body and blood, to think that you will as surely be admitted to the joy of feasting with him in his Father's kingdom!

LECTURE.

YOU have heard to-day that our Lord, a little before his death, instituted the sacrament of the supper; and at the same time explained the nature of it to his disciples, by telling them that the bread which he put into their hands was his body; and the cup which he gave them, with a charge that they should all drink of it, was his blood of the New Testament, shed for many for the remission of sins. And that we might have no doubt concerning the intent of the command, or whether it was given only to the disciples then present, St. Paul tells us plainly that it is a
“shewing

“ shewing the Lord’s death till he come,”
 1 Cor. xi. 26. and, therefore, to continue always
 in force, and be observed by all Christians to the
 end of the world, as a standing memorial, or per-
 petual declaration of the virtue of his death, and
 of their faith in it. Which may also be assuredly
 gathered from the very words here made use of,
 namely, that the cup is his blood of the New
 Testament, shed for the remission of sins. For
 who are they in any age who do not want forgive-
 ness? Let all who know they do, be very thank-
 ful to Christ for appointing this means of bring-
 ing his death to their remembrance, and setting it
 as it were continually before their eyes; and that
 you may perform this sacred action to the benefit
 of your souls, and to the end for which it was or-
 dained, be careful to understand the meaning of
 it. Christ said to the disciples, he says to you, if
 you would be entitled to that high and happy
 name, Take, eat, this is, or represents, my body,
 given, broken, pierced, nailed to the cross, sacri-
 ficed for you; he says, Drink ye all of this cup,
 for it is the New Testament, or God’s covenant
 of peace to you, in my blood, which is shed for
 many for the remission of sins; for as many as
 gladly accept the benefit therein declared and of-
 fered to them; for all believers.

You see then, that whatever preparation, what-
 ever other disposition or qualification may be ne-
 cessary or proper, when you come to this sacra-
 ment, the great point is faith in the death of
 Christ, as that “ whereby alone we obtain remis-
 sion.

sion of our sins, and are made partakers of the kingdom of heaven ;” and that as it was appointed to remind us of this joyful and most interesting article of our religion, and keep us steadfast in the profession of it, so it can be effectual to none but those who believe that Christ died for their sins, and come there in humility to have a sense of the pardon of them renewed and confirmed. Has he done great things for us ? Has he delivered us from the punishment of our sins, and reconciled us to God, by taking the curse of them upon himself ? He would have it believed ; he would have it remembered ; he has contrived a way to fix our attention upon it, and have it always kept in mind ; he would not suffer us to entertain a thought that salvation is by any work of our own ; he has here put the matter beyond all dispute ; it is by the pardon of our sins, and pardon by the shedding of his blood. Believe this, and then take, and eat the bread which is a lively sign, or speaking picture of his crucified body, and drink of the cup to which he invites you, in full assurance that, as he has declared it to be for the remission of sins, it can never fail of its effect. Think and do what else you will, if you rest your souls for pardon and life upon any thing but Christ crucified, if this great truth of scripture is not always uppermost in your minds, and especially at the time of receiving the sacrament, that we are saved, one and all, because Christ died for us, you do not discern the Lord’s body ; you do not understand why you take it ; you are not believers.

Do

Do not think that, because I mention faith in Christ's death as the great point which you are to keep steadily in view, and build your hope and comfort upon as Christians, that I am advising and encouraging you to come to the sacrament without a proper frame of mind in other respects; for indeed and in truth, a right faith is a right frame of mind, and one cannot be separated from the other. The right faith is, that we believe and confess, on the warrant of God's word, that Christ, by his one offering of himself, made a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world; but there is no way of coming to this faith but by a penitent acknowledgment of our sins, and of the vengeance which is due to them, with a will to forsake them, and an earnest desire to keep mercy by keeping the commandments, and living unto him that died for us. When we know and believe that we are redeemed by the precious blood of the Son of God, and see in the glass of his sufferings what a depth of evil there is in sin, and how dreadfully it was punished in the person of Christ, we can never be such rebels to him, nor such enemies to our own peace, as to retain a love for it. When we consider the love of God and of Christ in our redemption, and that this sacrament is both the sign and seal of it, not only representing, but actually conveying all the benefits of Christ's passion to every worthy receiver, we must either be totally ignorant of our condition in sin, or dead to all sense of gratitude, if we do not find it to be the kindling of our love to the

author

author of so great a deliverance. When we remember that we come there as sinners for a pardon, and to have our ten thousand talents forgiven, it will strongly incline us to forgive and live in charity with all the world, and fill us with everlasting shame and confusion, if we are not transformed into the likeness of that mercy by which we live. I say, this faith of itself, wherever it is a true work, will be the right temper of our minds, our greatest security against sin, a most prevailing reason for fidelity and dutiful subjection to the Saviour, and our best preparation for a worthy partaking of his most blessed body and blood. Let it be our prayer to be always kept in a sacramental frame, self-emptied, believing, rejoicing, adoring, thankful; that we may so profess our faith in Christ as to live up to it, and always so receive the sacrament as to be strengthened by it in faith, love, and obedience.

The P R A Y E R.

BLESSED be thy name, O Jesus, and blessed be thy goodness for reconciling us to God by the offering of thy crucified body, and washing us from our sins in thy blood. We beseech thee to confirm us in this faith, and to work in us, more and more, a lively sense of that peace of God which passeth all understanding. That it might be assuredly believed, and always remembered, as the ground of our hope and rejoicing, thou didst institute the sacrament of thy

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body and blood, and therein continually representest thyself to us in the very act of suffering and dying for our sins. Let the memory of thy death be ever precious to us; and thy command to shew it in the manner thou hast ordained, sacred to all who know thee as their Saviour, love thy salvation, and glory in the name of thy disciples. And as thou hast redeemed us to God, and restored us to a state of favour and sonship with thy eternal Father, accomplish in us all the good pleasure of thy will; make us the children of God by similitude of nature; make us thine in all holy obedience; we beseech thee to live in us; let the great love, wherewith thou hast loved us, take possession of our souls, and so rule in our hearts that we may love thee, and all mankind for thy sake; evermore praise God for thee, and be accepted through thee, our only Saviour and Redeemer. *Amen.*

SECTION LXI.

EXPOSITION.

St. MATTHEW, Chap. xxvi. ver. 31.

ALL ye shall be offended because of me this night.—

Little did they think how near they were deserting him by a shameful flight. As little do we know what we are, till we are tried.

Ver. 31.

Ver. 31. I will smite the shepherd.—This is spoken in the person of God the Father, smiting Christ for our sakes, and our sin in him,

Ver. 32. But after I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee.—As the shepherd goes before his sheep. How unpardonable does their desertion of Christ seem to us! and yet here is not one word of upbraiding or resentment; but instead of it, an assurance of his resurrection, and a promise that he would not forsake *them*.

Ver. 34. This night before the cock crow.—That is, before three o'clock in the morning, which they called cock-crowing. St. Mark says, before the cock crow twice; and accordingly a cock did crow once before the usual time.

—*Thou shalt deny me thrice.*—As he did, though he had three several warnings given him of it in the compass of a few hours; in the morning of this day, *John* xiii. 38. *At the supper, Luke* xxii. 34. *After the supper here, and Mark* xiv. 30.

Ver. 35. Peter said unto him, &c. likewise also said they all.—In the confidence of an outward profession, but untried faith. “Be not high-minded, but fear.”

Ver. 38. My soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death.—Not merely with the fear of death, but the sin of the world, now lying heavy on him. Oh! what a burden, and how hard to bear, even

the God-man! How could the guilt of it be more emphatically declared, and how can we help feeling it in this description of his agony under it, which is recorded for our instruction!

Ver. 39. If it be possible, let this cup pass from me.— Is the expression of what he felt, and not what he wished. Certainly it was no part of his will, neither did he pray to be delivered from his passion.

—Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt.— Ah! there is but one perfect, happy will in the universe, and all opposition to it, or deviation from it, is certain misery. And, therefore, to bring us to an union with it, was one great end of all that Christ did and suffered.

Ver. 40. Could ye not watch with me one hour?— Didst thou ever watch one hour with Christ, and for thy soul?

Ver. 41. Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation.— And if we do watch and pray, we shall not enter into temptation, that is, fall by it. For the words from Christ's mouth have the nature of a promise, and cannot fail us. Come to this test. Though you may deceive yourselves by a course of formal, unmeaning prayer, yet, on the other hand, if you do not watch unto prayer, and watch over your hearts with a godly jealousy, you may know, with infallible certainty, that you are

are not striving against sin, nor desirous of the blessings of the gospel.

Ver. 41. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.—This may not be mentioned as the ground of an excuse, but to put us upon our guard; and is strongly expressive of the danger of not watching against temptation, and the misery of being overcome by it. And whenever we are, I believe we shall find that this direction has been neglected.

Ver. 44. And prayed the third time, saying the same words.—Because the disposition and distress continued the same. So the penitent, guilt-confounded soul can say nothing but mercy! mercy! mercy! without fear of offending against, *Matt. vi. 7.*

Ver. 45. Sleep on now, and take your rest.—You have let slip the season of watching and prayer, and will soon find, to your cost, that you are not proof against temptation. Or the words might be spoken, in the way of farther reproof, ye do sleep on, and are careless to the last.

Ver. 49. Hail Master, and kissed him.—Profession of Christ, with an unconverted heart, is this kiss.

Ver. 50. And Jesus said unto him, Friend.—Thus he speaks to thee, O sinner. Let this word go deep into thy heart.

Ver. 51.

Ver. 51. And behold, one of them which were with Jesus, stretched out his hand, and drew his sword.— This act of Peter's misguided zeal, was calculated to injure his divine Master rather than serve him. The conclusion likely to be drawn from it would be, that he taught his followers to resist lawful authority.

Ver. 52. All that take the sword.— Rashly, and unauthorized, are liable, and deserve to *perish with the sword*. It was also a prediction of Peter's suffering.

Ver. 53. Thinkest thou, that I cannot now pray, &c.— O! strong rebuke to our impotent malice! We want nothing but power to execute our purposes: Christ, with all the power of heaven at his command, would not defend himself. There was scripture in the way, and he was all submission.

Ver. 54. But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled?— So the scripture must be fulfilled by us, or it will be fulfilled against us. Happy shall we be when we have this example always before us, and can say, in the power of these words, to every temptation, "How then shall the scriptures be fulfilled?"

Ver. 56. But all this was done, that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled.— This shews to what intent the foregoing words, ver. 55. were spoken, viz. that before his hour was come, they could

could not take him ; and when it was, the scriptures must be fulfilled, by the same necessity that a child comes to the birth at its time.

Ver. 56. Then all the disciples forsook him and fled.—Take notice of the men ; and that they were the very same, who, afterwards, in the power of the Holy Ghost, went into all the world to testify their Saviour openly, with a certain knowledge that they were to lay down their lives for him.

LECTURE.

IN the foregoing verses we have an account of the time and manner of Christ's instituting the sacrament, with a command to the disciples then present, and in them to all others, to perform this sacred act of Christian worship ; telling them that the bread which he gave them to eat was his body or passion, thereby represented with all its beneficial effects, and the cup which he delivered to them was his blood of the New Testament, shed for many for the remission of sins. Would he have his crucified body, and the shedding of his blood for the remission of sins, thus commemorated, and as it were continually presented to our senses ? Did he reserve this point of instruction to the last, to give it all the weight and solemnity of his dying command, and to the end we might observe what doctrine more especially it is which this sacrament, as well as the other, was ordained to preach to us, and what stress he lays upon it ? Methinks then it appears plainly what we

we should preach, and you believe. You are often hearing that the word gospel signifies good tidings, and that Jesus is the Saviour of the world. But do you ever put your souls to answer the questions, what these good tidings are, and how he saves us? Not by any thing we can do, or that he enables us to do; not by any power, repentance, or holiness of our own; we must let that alone for ever; it is only and altogether by his death, as the price of our redemption, and meritorious cause of our salvation; and as sure as we come to the sacrament with this faith, we are partakers of his body and blood, and may boldly plead what he has done and suffered for us, as our discharge from the guilt of sin, and full satisfaction to the justice of God. And are not these good tidings to condemned, helpless sinners, and gladly to be received by us as nothing less than life from the dead? I beseech you, observe what it is that I am recommending to your notice, and earnestly desire to have well considered and thoroughly believed, namely, that if Christ knew the great point on which our salvation turns, it is by the remission of our sins, as that is by his body broken, and blood shed for us. And because he ordained the sacrament of the supper for a perpetual remembrance of the sacrifice of his death, and of the benefits which we receive thereby; I say, for this reason we may be sure it is necessary that we should remember what Christ is to us at all other times, and have it deeply imprinted in our hearts, that reconciliation to God, by his death, is the very belief which makes us Christians.

But

But though we must always so remember Christ at to be well-grounded in this persuasion, that we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins; and the words which he made use of when he ordained this sacrament, as I am telling you, more especially point out this doctrine to us as the ground of our hope, and were intended to confirm us in this belief; yet we must also remember, and be well aware, what sin is which crucified him, and could be atoned with nothing but the inconceivable pains and sufferings of the Son of God. It is made little account of by the world, and sleeps quietly in our bosoms, and the breaking of a commandment is as nothing in our eyes; but see here what an evil and bitter thing it is, and how it tried all the patience even of the God-man, when he was to bear the load of it, and offer himself to the stroke of divine justice. "My soul, says he, is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." Not merely from the apprehension of dying, or the pain of the cross considered in itself; but because he was to take up our sins thereon, to suffer what we should have suffered, and feel the whole weight of God's vengeance and our punishment in his soul and body. Oh! there is great force of instruction in the words, and a thousand tongues to warn us of our danger, of the curse which cleaves to us for sin, and the horrible, unknown pains we must endure, if we are not delivered from the condemnation of it before we die. Let us not, therefore, mistake, nor build our hope of salvation by Christ on deceitful grounds, by dividing his doctrine, or leaving out

any part of it. If he was wounded for our transgressions, and had our iniquities laid upon him, by the appointment and will of God, we that repent and trust in him shall not suffer for them ever again in our own persons ; for " God is faithful" to his covenant with Christ, and in him with all believers, " and just to forgive us our sins," because the penalty of them has been paid. And this, which I cannot repeat too often, is the faith, comfort, and rejoicing of Christians, that our ten thousand sins will be forgiven us, as surely as we believe in him for this end. This, I say again and again, is the glory of our religion ; the true knowledge of Christ ; the Spirit's testimony to us concerning him, and should be the element we live in ; the joy of our hearts ; and working at the root of all we do.

But if sin is unfelt, unfeared, and unrepented of ; if we have no sense of the evil and danger of it, nor dread of God's displeasure against us for it, in vain do we talk of believing in Christ for the remission of sins ; we can possibly have no such faith, no working of desire towards it, nor desire of the mercy which comes by it, great as it is, and greatly wanted by us, any more than we would go to a Physician to be cured of a distemper which we have not, or sue to the King for the pardon of life, when we know it never was forfeited. If we die in this state, what we read of Christ's agonies and sufferings, under the weight of sin then laid upon him, (and read for this end that we may know the extreme curse of
sin,

sin, and never feel it in our own persons) will be our portion for ever and ever. Let these three things, therefore, be always kept in mind as the sum and substance of what we should know and believe in order to salvation : 1. That the wages of sin is death, even death eternal. 2. That the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord. 3. That no man has a title to this gift, nor right to believe that his sins are forgiven, who does not repent of them, and endeavour, in truth and sincerity, to live by the rule which Christ has given him. Let it be our daily prayer, and the ground of all our requests to God, that we may be established more and more in these great truths of scripture, and make them our guide to the glory which Christ has purchased for all that unfeignedly love him.

The P R A Y E R.

ALMIGHTY GOD, who madeſt thy bleſſed Son to be ſin for us, that in his own perſon he might bear and take it away ; make us know and feel in the bottom of our hearts, that we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of ſins, and that there is no other name under heaven given among men whereby we muſt be ſaved. Let thy Spirit enable us to ſay that Jeſus is the Lord, to the praiſe of the glory of thy grace, and that we, whoſe conſciences by ſin are accuſed, by thy merciful pardon may be abſolved. Let the ſenſe of our vilenefs and condemnation

demnation in sin bring us to repentance, and our repentance to Christ, and Christ to thee, washed in his blood, and purified unto obedience; that, walking worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called, we may hold fast the hope of everlasting life, and receive the end of our faith, even the salvation of our souls, by the same Jesus Christ, *Amen.*

SECTION LXII.

EXPOSITION.

St. MATTHEW, Chap. xxvi. ver. 58.

BUT *Peter followed him afar off.*—Now his fears began to work strongly. But think not only of Peter. Alas! it is the case of many; though they pretend to follow Christ, it is a great way off, as to any lively faith, or pure obedience.

Ver. 60. But found none.—It was necessary that Christ's innocence should be declared.

Ver. 63. But Jesus held his peace.—It was necessary that he should not stand upon his innocence, because his intention was to suffer; neither, as being in the place of sinners, and bearing their sins, would he deny the guilt he had taken upon himself.

Ver. 64. Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said.—It is as thou hast said; I do not deny it; I am.
He

He was silent to the charge of guilt; he could not be silent here, without denying himself to be the Son of God. And he farther tells them, that they should one day see him, who now appeared before them as a malefactor, in all his power and majesty, as the Son of man, him spoken of by the prophet Daniel, the Messiah, or Son of God. "Every eye shall see him!" and those to their inexpressible joy, who have seen him here in the glory of his salvation.

Ver. 66. They answered and said, He is guilty of death.—As taking our sin he was, and submitted to the sentence; and we never believe in him, till we know that we deserve to suffer death.

Ver. 67, 68. Then did they spit in his face, &c.—Turn not thy whole indignation against the vile, abominably-insulting Jew; but if thy sins had their full share in putting the Son of God to this open shame, fetch a deep groan for thyself.

O Jesus, how I long to imitate thee, to possess thy meekness, to be happy in thy patience! I see in this single instance what it is to be born again, and what need there is for it. When we can do as thou didst, bear the insolent stroke, the opprobrious taunt, the contemptuous spitting, calm and unruffled, we are new creatures, have a new nature, and a joyful experience of the wisdom that cometh down from above.

Ver. 75.

Ver. 75. And Peter remembered the words of Jesus.—He had a root of faith in him, and though he had fallen grievously, could remember the words of Jesus for his rising again. Lord, when we fall, raise us up again, though it be with bitter sorrow; but keep us from falling, lest we never repent.

—And he went out, and wept bitterly.—Retire this moment into thyself. Think how soon Peter's repentance followed his sin, and how long thine has been deferred; how bitterly he wept, and what cause thou hast for it; how graciously he was received to favour again, and what a Saviour thou hast to wipe away thy tears.

LECTURE.

YOU must not think, dearly beloved, either that your ordinary failings and infirmities prove you to be out of the covenant of grace, or that grosser sins are so deadly, that if repented of they cannot be forgiven. This was once matter of controversy among Christians, and some, from mistaken passages of scripture, warmly contended that the sins of believers were unpardonable; or, at least, that they were not to be received to the benefit of absolution by the church, and must be left to the unknown mercy of God. But this opinion was generally condemned, and Peter's case lies full against it. You may fall like him; you must rise again by repentance as he did; and if
you

you do, will be received to favour, as he was, and as high in the esteem of Christ as ever ; perhaps more watchful, more faithful, more zealous for the time to come, certainly more sensible of your weakness, more diffident of yourselves, and more thankful for the grace of the gospel. We have great cause to praise God that Peter's denial of Christ is recorded for our instruction ; that we might neither presume upon our own strength, nor despair of mercy in case of transgression. Our safety consists in humble dependence on divine support to keep us from falling ; and whenever we are so unhappy as to fall into sin, Christ has a call and a look for us, and Peter's repentance is our pattern, and the way to pardon, as pardon is only by Christ. For if the gospel had ended here, Peter, notwithstanding his tears, would have been given up to condemnation ; since, without shedding of blood, there is no remission, and that must be the blood of the Holy Jesus, God and man ; man to suffer, and God to satisfy, and make his sufferings, in the human nature, available to our salvation. Do you know, do you believe what he has done for you ? Do you commit your souls to him, with desire to be helped and saved by him ? And if there is some one point on which your salvation turns more than any other, Do you enquire carefully what it is, as a matter you would not be ignorant of, or deceived in, for the world ? Surely, if you are a sinner, and under a sentence of death for sin, one thing is needful ; you want deliverance ; you must have a way to escape ; you must be reconciled to God, or perish. What now
will

will you do, and where will you look for help in this extremity? Will you offer a lame repentance, or any repentance, to God, as amends for your sin? Will you make and depend upon promises of obedience, without knowing how much goes to it, and which, therefore, you certainly never will perform? Will any obedience of yours answer for what is past, ensure your peace, and redeem your soul out of the hands of justice, when it is once forfeited by sin?

I have one thing to say to you, and if you will not hear it, you must consider what else you have to trust to, and what other foundation you can be upon for pardon and life. Christ is your ransom, Christ is your peace, Christ is the reconciler in his blood, and the lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world, "believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." You will say, you do; that you are baptized into Christ, pray in the name of Christ, and come to the sacrament to remember his death, and with thankfulness to God for it. Alas! all this is soon said; but be not deceived. If we are saved by grace, through faith, for the love of God, let us understand what the grace is which saves us, and what the faith is by which we receive, and are made partakers of it. Grace is the mercy of deliverance from the sentence of condemnation we are under for sin, by the sacrifice and death of Christ, offering himself to the stroke of God's justice in our stead, and making our peace by taking our sin and punishment upon himself. So
we

we are redeemed, so we live, so we are the children of God, happy in his favour, and heirs of his glory. And, the faith by which we receive this grace, is the heart's closing with the offer, and joyful acceptance of it, as mercy from the Lord, with a perfect renunciation of ourselves, and in opposition to any other method of salvation. Stand fast upon this ground; know yourselves to be what you are, always sinners; see your need of Christ in your very best estate; see him given to you of God in a covenant of life; see his body broken, and his blood poured out for the redemption of your souls; and if your sins were ten thousand times more and greater than they are, you need not have one fear; the truth and faithfulness of God are engaged for your present assurance and eternal justification, and nothing can hinder the effect of his gracious designs towards you but your own unbelief. My brethren, you cannot help observing that what I am saying goes beyond all forms, and is a great deal more than any outward profession of Christ. It is the work of the Spirit, however it begun, leading us to the knowledge of sin, revealing Christ as the sole means appointed of God for deliverance from the guilt of it, and turning our wills against it. If you have not taken the first step toward Christ, which is self-condemnation and sense of the curse of sin, you never took the second, which is faith in him for the remission of it; you could not possibly cast a look toward him, nor come to him to be relieved of a burden which you never felt. And if you have taken these two steps, been convinced

of sin, and laid it upon the head of Christ, with great rejoicing in the conscience, and many thanksgivings to God for the mercy of a Saviour, you will not, you cannot, stop short at the third ; your faith will carry you on to obedience, and make it the steady purpose, sincere endeavour, and great work of your lives. You will then be afraid of nothing so much as losing your interest in Christ by doing what he forbids, or neglecting any thing that he has commanded ; your vow in baptism, to fight manfully against sin, the world, and the devil, will be weighty upon your minds ; you will pray daily that he, who has saved you from the guilt, would also deliver you from the power of sin, and your hearts will be in your prayers.

BLESSED LORD, who hast caused all holy scriptures to be written for our learning, that we might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent ; bring us, we beseech thee, to the hearing of thy word in faith and humility, and seal the instruction of it to our hearts. Grant that as Christ is therein revealed to us for life, we may find him in the fulness of his blessings, be washed from all spot of sin in his blood, and sanctified by his Spirit. Have mercy on us, and grant us thy peace, and keep us ever mindful of our obligation to live unto him that died for us. Let us search and try our ways, and watch over our hearts lest we fall into sin ; and when we do, let us call to mind that Christ is
looking

looking upon us with a mixture of grief and pity, that we may repent without delay, and turn to thee our God. Make us a happy rejoicing people in the sense of thy love; make us a willing people in the day of thy power; enable us to consecrate ourselves to thee by Jesus Christ, and accept us for his sake. *Amen.*

SECTION LXIII.

EXPOSITION.

St. MATTHEW, Chap. xxvii. ver. 1.

The sixth day.

Matthew xxvii. 1—61. Mark xv. Luke xxiii.
John xviii. 28—40. xix.

WHEN *the morning was come, &c.*—The morning of the happiest day for mankind in the whole course of time.

Ver. 2. And when they had bound him.—The Jews; our sins. All we bound him, and delivered him to Pontius Pilate. If you do not follow him with this thought in every step of his passion, this gospel has been read to you in vain; and you will now hear the conclusion of it with cold hearts, without desire of his benefits, or faith in his death.

* *Ver. 3. Then Judas, &c. repented himself.*—Not truly, and toward God; for then he would not have hanged himself. All sense of sin, and remorse of conscience for it, is not repentance. Judas was stung home, and yet it is certain he did not repent, any otherwise than the devils do. Reader, this is an opening of hell to thee.

Ver. 4. Saying, I have sinned, &c.—He knew his sin; was horribly oppressed with the guilt of it, and could not help owning it to the chief priests, but did not confess it to God with hope of mercy; and herein his repentance was defective.

—*And they said, What is that to us? See thou to that.*—This is all the comfort that the devil and sin have for us in the end. Christ has better. Lay down thy sin at the foot of his cross. Thou art hearing of his death for it, for thy sin, whenever thou offerest it up to him in repentance.

Ver. 6. Because it is the price of blood.—O sanctified villains! “Straining out a gnat, and swallowing a camel.” They would not suffer the price of blood to come into the sacred treasury, and yet it was what they themselves had given for the shedding of it.

Ver. 9. Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, &c.—They are the words of Zechariah xi. 12, 13. It is a fair solution of this difficulty, which, I believe, was first observed by

by Dr. Lightfoot, that as the prophecy of Jeremiah was sometimes placed first in order in the volume of the prophets, so the whole was called by, and cited under his name. Nevertheless, they might be the words of Jeremiah himself, in some prophecy not now extant.

*Ver. 11. And Jesus said unto him, Thou sayest.—*I am, though not in the sense that Pilate meant.

*Ver. 12. He answered nothing.—*To the accusation of the chief priests and elders. Standing in the place of sinners, he would not deny the guilt he bore.

*Ver. 17. Whom will ye that I release unto you?—*Dost not thou give up Christ and retain thy sin? This is now put to thy choice.

*Ver. 18. For he knew that for envy they had delivered him.—*They thought they were doing an act of justice and religion. Pilate knew, and St. Matthew knew, that envy was at the bottom of it. The true motives of our actions lie deep, and without great care, will be hidden from ourselves. What is man, with all his sincerity, without the blood of Christ?

*Ver. 19. His wife sent unto him, &c.—*Judas the betrayer, and Pilate the judge of Christ, bore witness to his innocence. Here is another testimony added by a dream from heaven.

Ver. 20.

Ver. 20. But the chief priests and elders persuaded the multitude, &c.—And God suffered them to prevail; so that the multitude, which just before was for Christ, now clamoured as vehemently for his crucifixion.

Ver. 23. And the governor said, Why, what evil hath he done?—Jesus was silent in his own defence. Observe, I beseech you, how God supplied this defect, by making Pilate repeatedly speak up for his innocence; which was a more convincing testimony of it to all ages, than his own protestation would have been,

Ver. 24. I am innocent of the blood of this just person.—Not by washing his hands, when he acted against clear knowledge and conviction.

Ver. 25. His blood be on us, and on our children.—It was terribly soon after. It will be, in the saving virtue of it, at their conversion. It is now upon us for good, through mercy, by their rejection of it. O! let us fly to it! If we do not seek for healing in the blood of Christ, we join with the Jews in this curse.

Ver. 28. And they put on him a scarlet robe.—Cruel mockery! patient Jesus! proud man that will bear nothing!

Ver. 29. And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon his head.—This would cause exquisite pain in so tender a part, especially
as

as the thorns were struck into his temples. Still we do not hear a word of complaint from him.

Ver. 32. Him they compelled to bear his cross.—He bore it himself at the first, but now probably was so faint and weary that he could bear it no longer. But though the flesh was weak, the spirit was willing to the last.

Ver. 34. He would not drink.—It was a stupifying potion, and he would not lose the use of his reason, nor diminish the sense of his sufferings.

LECTURE.

THE chapter of Christ's death leads me to speak of the benefit and necessity of it, and to declare to you the great point of Christian belief. It is that "Christ died for our sins;" it is that "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them;" it is that "by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified," made us clean in God's sight, purged our sin, paid the price of our redemption with his blood, blotted out the handwriting that was against us, and bound us over to death, removed our curse by taking it upon himself, satisfied the justice of God, and made it our friend; so that we need not have any more distressing fears, or trouble of conscience, on account of sin, than if it had never been committed; and when we put our souls to answer the question,
What

What must we do to be saved ? We may boldly plead the death of Christ as our atonement, offer it to God as a full discharge from the guilt and punishment of our sin, and assure ourselves on the warrant of his word, a thousand times repeated for our comfort and joy of faith, that we shall never be called to account for the debt which has been paid, and which God has accepted at the hands of Christ for our justification. Oh ! what a glorious, safe condition are we brought into by the free grace and mercy of God, and how happy should we be, if we were established in the belief of it ! rejoicing only in Christ, fixing our eyes steadily upon him as our ransom, and, through him, looking on God as a reconciled Father. Remember that out of Christ he is a consuming fire ; and that if you presume to approach him without an interest in Christ, though you make ever so many resolutions of amendment, and weary yourselves to death with a law-work, all your endeavours, works, and services will be rejected. Think what you mean when you say in the creed, “ I believe in Jesus ; ” and if you would be believers indeed, let it be your firm persuasion, that as God laid on him the iniquity of us all, so he made our peace by the blood of his cross, and that, if we trust to any thing else for our reconciliation with God, we deny the necessity, and can have no share in the merit of his death. You will say, Must we not then repent, and live to God in obedience ? Yes, “ we must repent or perish ; ” but take notice withal, that we can have no right knowledge of sin, nor true repentance for it, till
we

we see so much evil in it, and such a curse cleaving to us with it, as no endeavours of ours can remove. So long as we are insensible of the desert of it, and of our own inability to make satisfaction to the justice of God for it, our repentance will, of course, be as short as the false measure we take of it. See it in the sufferings of Christ; see it making his soul exceeding sorrowful even unto death; see it forcing a bloody sweat from him; see it nailing him to the cross; hear him crying out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me," and you will know better what it is, and what repentance it calls for.

And as for obedience, if it is serving God without fear, with freedom of spirit, and the affection of dutiful children, we can never attain to any thing like it but in the way of believing that "we are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." The foundation of all we do must be laid in this faith, and it is the excellence of it to turn our hearts and wills to God in the truth of a pure obedience. It sets us free in all respects, both from the condemnation and slavery of sin; and if you were once well grounded in the sense of God's love in Christ, and prized it as your dearest treasure, I can tell you with great certainty what you would, and what you would not do. You would not live in known sin; you would not wilfully break any of the commandments; you would not be strangers to your own hearts; you would read the scripture to know what God would have you to do; you would pray daily for a blessing upon

your souls ; you would worship God in your families ; you would attend regularly upon the church-service on Sundays, and many of you, who can, at other times, and all come constantly to the sacrament, to see Christ, as it were, in the very act of dying for you. Alas ! my friends, you have no such appearance ; you know this is not your state ; in the main you are fearless of sin, remiss in the duties of your religion, and have cold hearts for God. And I now tell you the reason of all this ; it is because you have no faith, or, which is all one, no heart-felt sense of the great blessing of a Saviour, nor thankfulness to God for redemption by him.

My brethren, the truth of God for the life of our souls is this—Christ has wrought a great salvation for us, and if ever we are made partakers of it, we must know that it is altogether his work, and receive it by faith as a mercy and gift. He suffered what we should have suffered, and did what we should do ; he died to save us from the everlasting death of our souls and bodies, because nothing else could ; he paid a perfect obedience to the law that it might be imputed to us, for “ he is the head of the church, and the Saviour of the body,” so that in union with him, and as his members, we are in the sight of God what he is. This, I say, is the glorious mystery, and great, leading point of our religion, and in this belief we have confidence towards God, and the Spirit witnessing with our spirit, that we are his children. But know also, that faith has a work to do under

under Christ, and that work is obedience. He says to every heart where he comes, "Keep my commandments;" and when his love is there, it sweetly constrains us to live unto him that died for us, and to walk worthy of God, who hath called us unto his kingdom and glory. So walk, and let *this* faith perfect your repentance, keep you steadfast in obedience, and be working at the root of all you do, that you may be his disciples indeed; for as Christ has opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers, even so he is theirs in all the power of his love, with all the merits of his life and death.

The P R A Y E R.

BLESSED GOD, who hast delivered us from the curse of sin and everlasting death, by the precious death of thy dear Son; grant, we beseech thee, that we may thankfully receive this thy inestimable benefit, and evermore rejoice in the Lord Jesus Christ, as our only Saviour and Redeemer. Let thy word, "that by grace we are saved, through faith," be assuredly believed by all that hear it, and let thy peace take possession of every heart. Convince us of sin, convince us of our misery and helplessness in sin, and make the blood of atonement our only refuge in the day of our trouble for sin. And, O Lord, when we are refreshed with the sense of thy mercy, let faith have its perfect work. Renew us by thy grace, purge us from all filthiness of flesh and spirit,

keep the holy fire of love burning in our souls, and bring us in the way of obedience to thy kingdom of glory, through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. *Amen.*

SECTION LXIV.

EXPOSITION.

St. MATTHEW, Chap. xxvii. ver. 37.

AND set up over his head, accusation.—His right; his triumph of love; our glory and salvation. That is seldom an accusation of the saints which the world thinks so.

Ver. 38. Then were there two thieves crucified with him.—He snatched one of them from the jaws of hell, to shew the virtue of his cross to all repenting sinners. The other would not confess his sin, and died a thief. If thou wouldst not die a condemned man look to Jesus.

Ver. 42. He saved others, himself he cannot save.—He would not save himself, that he might save others.

—*Let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him.*—He must, of all necessity, die there to be believed in. They not knowing this, could believe nothing concerning him; and the same prejudice in them which had been proof against

against so many miracles, would not have yielded to this.

Ver. 44. The thieves also cast the same in his teeth. Probably both at first, though one immediately repented.

Ver. 45. From the sixth hour there was darkness, &c.—Universal and preternatural. The sun was not regularly eclipsed, it being then full moon.

Ver. 46. Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, &c.—Come here, wretched man, and take some measure of thy guilt; thine, whoever thou art. Be warned by this loud cry, what vengeance is hanging over thy head, and every moment ready to crush thee, if thou hast not made Christ thy hope. I say, take notice; let thy heart take notice how he, who bore every thing, till now, with meek silence, was so oppressed with the weight of man's sin, that it exercised all his own divine patience, and forced him to cry out in the anguish and bitterness of his soul, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Think of his love too, and what he endured that we might not be sentenced to depart from God, nor be totally forsaken of him.

—*My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* He says, "My God, my God;" and dreadful as the desertion was, it could not deprive him of this faith. Observe it for thyself, distressed soul; he may be *thy* God in the utter want of sensible comfort,

fort, thy faith may be immoveable, and thy trust in him as strong as ever.

Ver. 47. This man calleth for Elias.—Wresting his word Eli, Eli, as if he was still in expectation of Elias's coming.

Ver. 48. And straightway one of them, &c. gave him to drink.—As if by way of support, and to gain time for the coming of Elias; his forerunner, if he was the Christ.

Ver. 49. The rest said, Let be, &c.—Elias, if he will come, is help enough without the vinegar, All in scorn.

Ver. 50. Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice.—Of joy and exultation, for man's redemption, for the work he had finished, and the glory that was to follow.

—*Yielded up the ghost.*—Of his own accord, and by an act of his own power; dying by as great a miracle as he was born, or any he had wrought during his life. When he had purged our sins, he would not retain his spirit a moment longer, but went in haste to finish his conquests, by overcoming death.

Ver. 51. And behold the vail of the temple was rent.—The mystery of the vail being rent, is explained, *Heb. ix. 8. and x. 19, 20.* It was the opening of heaven to all the world through his blood,

blood, by rending the vail of his flesh; but the vail still continues unrent to those who will not enter into the holiest by this way.

Ver. 51. And the earth did quake, and the rocks rent.—According to the reports of modern travellers, there is a rock still to be seen, so rent as to be a standing witness of this relation, and shewing, plainly, that it could be the effect of nothing but an earthquake, or divine power.

Ver. 53. And came out of the graves after his resurrection.—Not before, though it is here related. For Christ must rise first, and they could only rise in virtue of his resurrection. And farther, it cannot well be supposed that they arose only to appear to others, and then lie down in their graves again, but to ascend with him, soul and body, into heaven.

Ver. 54. Now when the Centurion, &c.—It is remarkable that the hearts of this heathen captain and his soldiers were shook with the earthquake, and other signs which accompanied the death of Jesus, while the Jews continued obdurate and incredulous.

—*Truly this was the Son of God.*—The Spirit edited this gospel by St. Matthew to bring us to this confession, and saying it, with a true faith, is salvation.

Ver. 55, 56.

Ver. 55, 56. And many women were there, &c.—
It is recorded for the honour of these women, that they followed Jesus from Galilee, ministered unto him, did not forsake him when the disciples fled, stayed to watch his sepulchre. Mary Magdalene especially, who is mentioned first, could not desert him, who had cast seven devils out of her. His love, when thou knowest it, will keep thee as close to him.

*Ver. 57. A rich man of Arimathea, named Joseph, who also himself was Jesus' disciple.—*A much happier condition than that of great riches. Make it your own; and bless God that you may be "rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him."

*Ver. 58. He went to Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus.—*That it might have a decent burial, and not be laid amongst common malefactors. With what farther view Joseph did this, is hard to say; for it is not probable that he, any more than the other disciples, thought of Christ's resurrection. It was a new thing in the earth, and we must not wonder that they were all so slow of belief in this point before the event. Let us look back a moment upon the dark scene they passed through, to be thankful for the day-light we live in.

The seventh day, ver. 62—66.

Ver. 63. We remember that that deceiver said.—
Now then turn this against them, and to your
own

own benefit. If he did rise again, he was *not* a deceiver. He was, and is, all that thou wantest. He will raise thy soul out of its dead state, and thy body from the grave; he will dispel all thy fears, confirm thee in a state of lively hope, crown all thy wishes, and never leave thee nor forsake thee, till he has set thee at the right hand of God.

Ver. 66. So they went and made the sepulchre sure, &c.—It is a mighty confirmation of our faith in the article of Christ's resurrection, that his enemies took all this precaution to prevent his body being stolen away.

O Lord, be with us in the power of thy grace, as thou wast for us in thy death and resurrection; that in this belief we may walk comfortably before thee all the days of our lives; love God for the great love wherewith he loved us; die with thee to sin; take up our cross in meekness, self-denial, and patient suffering; answer the end of thy dying for us by being faithful to thee in all holy obedience; long for thy coming, and, thro' thy merits, be received into the innumerable company of those blessed spirits, whom thou hast redeemed to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation.

L E C T U R E.

GOD is just, and man is sinful. In these two points all must agree whoever think of God and themselves. But the heinous, accursed nature of sin, the greatness of God's displeasure against us for it, and the punishment to which it exposes us in a way of justice, we should never have known without the help of revelation; and our apprehensions of this matter are still wavering and confused, or, to speak the truth, we still continue, in general, blind and unbelieving, notwithstanding the clear light and positive assertions of scripture. Come then to the cross, and there behold the terrible justice of God. See his eternal and only begotten Son dying for the redemption of sinners, and learn from thence that, without the shedding of his blood, there could be no remission, and what sin is which required such a sacrifice. Death, you see, it must have. Sin, we know, brought death into the world. But know also, that by that word is meant the loss of God's favour, even eternal death; and that if he had not sent his Son in our flesh, to deliver us from condemnation, by taking our sin and punishment upon himself, we all must have endured the misery of it for ever in our own persons. Have these great truths of scripture been discovered to you, and are they weighty upon your souls? Do you understand that nothing is to be so much feared as sin, nothing so much to be desired and rejoiced in as the mercy of salvation from it? And are you set down in this belief that you are saved only

only and altogether by mercy, not by any repentance, humblings, works, or holiness of your own, but snatched as brands out of the fire, to the end that you may give God the glory of his grace, and determine with yourselves, as Paul did, "to know nothing (for life) but Jesus Christ, and him crucified?" Know this, therefore, whatever else you are ignorant of; know who it is that was crucified, and why he was crucified, and it will give you such an opening into the nature of God and the nature of sin, the severity of his justice in the punishment of it, the riches of his goodness in sparing the sinner, as nothing else can.

You will then understand the meaning of those words, *Exod.* xxxiv. which, without the knowledge of God in Christ, is one of the darkest passages in the bible. When Moses desired God to shew him his glory, in condescension to his request, and for the instruction of all ages, he thus proclaimed himself: "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and fourth generation." How is this? Does not one part of the description, or character, which God here gives of himself, seem to contradict the other? What comfort can there be in knowing that he is abundant in grace and good-

ness, if at the same time we are assured, from his own mouth, that he will by no means clear the guilty, as we all are? Can these things be reconciled? Yes; the iniquity of us all was visited in full measure, the guilt of the whole world was laid upon Christ, when he made his soul an offering for sin; and God (blessed be his name) is hereby found to be just in himself, and true to every tittle of his word, punishing to the utmost, but in such a way as to manifest the exceeding greatness of his mercy, and exalt the glory of his grace in our forgiveness.

Let but the soul once be persuaded of the justice of God as fully satisfied, and that his visitation for sin is already past, and all is clear; it will see the reconciliation of strict punishment with free pardon, rejoice before him in its new state, and account itself as innocent in his sight as Adam was at his first creation. Do you ask how you must come to this blessed belief? Search the scripture for it, and let the scripture search you; ask yourselves whether Christ was not crucified to discharge the debt of your sin; listen to the preaching of faith; pay but the same regard to the word of God that you would to the word of any credible person; pray for the Spirit to set it home upon your hearts; and you may be happy all the day long in the sense of his mercy, and dismiss all your fears for ever. I do suppose that you have fears on account of sin, and long to be relieved of that burden. Let those fears bring you to Christ, undone in yourselves, trusting in his

his merits and all-sufficient sacrifice, despairing of help in every other way, and you are believers. But many who think and call themselves Christians will never be found in that number. Be not deceived; not those who are ignorant of Christ, and of their need of him, or are unconcerned about their interest in him; not those who never were humbled for sin, or who wish to retain it; none who do not purpose to be governed by Christ; none who are not in a state of prayer for the blessings of Christ; none, I say, of all these are Christians in reality. You, therefore, who are fearless of sin, careless and unawakened, think what a sad thing it will be for you to have no share in the death of the Saviour, and to go out of the world unhelpt, unpardoned, unredeemed. You who know how to value Christ and his salvation, and would not give up your right in him for a thousand worlds, think what reason you have to bless God for this chapter. Let all hear it, and be saved; the doctrine of it is this: Whatever your condition is, if you are the greatest of sinners, the blood of Christ, whenever you fly to it in repentance, will make you clean; if you are one of the best of mankind, you can only be saved by believing that nothing else can, and that Christ must have died for you if there never had been another man or woman in the world.

The chapter concludes with an account of our Lord's burial, and it seems as if all the hopes of his followers were buried with him; for, "as yet, they knew not the scriptures, that he must rise again

again from the dead." It is, therefore, hard to say with what intent, or kind of belief, Joseph craved the body of Jesus in order to its burial. Doubtless he retained a very high sense of his innocence; and his boldness in going to Pilate was an attestation to it. But, probably, he was divinely over-ruled in what he did; since, if the body had been left hanging on the cross to putrify, or be devoured by dogs and birds, like those of other crucified malefactors, according to the law of the Romans, or laid in the publick place of burial with the two thieves, according to the custom of the Jews, it would have been much more difficult to evince the certainty of his resurrection, on which the truth of his mission and the credit of his religion were to depend. Let us not forget that we must all, very soon, lie down in our graves, and rise again to be happy or miserable for ever, as we have believed and lived.

The P R A Y E R.

O Saviour of the world, who, by thy cross and precious blood, hast redeemed us to God, save and help us, we humbly beseech thee. O Lamb of God, that takest away the sin of the world, have mercy on us, and grant us thy peace. Let thy cross humble us, thy death revive us, and thy Spirit purify us. Behold, we come to thee, undone in ourselves, trusting only in thy merits, and waiting for thy salvation. Be thou with us in all the power of thy grace, with all the riches

riches of thy love, that our hearts may burn within us at the memory of thy passion, and be devoted to thee in a sacred bond of love and gratitude. Remember us according to the favour that thou bearest unto thy people, that we may remember who thou art, and what we are ; remember thee as our Saviour and Master ; remember thee, and fear not ; remember thee, and sin not ; remember thee to live to thee, by thee, with thee, and praise God eternally for thee, our blessed Redeemer. Amen.

SECTION LXV.

EXPOSITION.

St. MATTHEW, Chap. xxviii. ver. 2.

THE angel of the Lord, &c. rolled back the stone.—

Christ did not want an angel to roll away the stone for him ; but this apparition was for the information and conviction of the women.

Ver. 5. Fear not ye.—Who love and seek Jesus, though timorous women ; let the stout-hearted soldiers fear ; you have no cause ; Christ is yours. Fear not, believers, only say this one thing truly, I know I seek Jesus which was crucified.

Ver. 6. He is not here.—Where are you ? Risen with Christ, or dead in trespasses and sins, and buried in the cares of a worldly life ?

Ver. 8.

Ver. 8. With fear and great joy.—An awful fear, and great joy, may be together; nay, cannot well be separated in a holy soul.

—And did run to bring his disciples word.—These were lively souls; and every expression here made use of lays open their hearts.

Ver. 9. Jesus met them, saying, All hail.—From Christ's mouth, this was more than a common form of salutation. The word is, Rejoice; as if he had said, "Behold, here I am, risen from the dead, to confirm all my promises, and give effect to all your wishes." Lord, thy life, thy death, thy resurrection, all speak this word. Speak it to us in the power of the Holy Ghost, that we may rejoice in thy salvation.

—And they came, and held him by the feet, and worshipped him.—Know thy want of him, and thou wilt fall down at his feet, hold him fast, and worship him, as thy life, thy Saviour, thy God, thy All.

Ver. 10. Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid. This was comfort indeed from his mouth. Believe in him, and take it to thyself. "Be not afraid;" you need not. Sweet encouragement!

—Go tell my brethren.—It was great condescension in Christ to call them, and in them all believers, his brethren. Let us say to him, as Thomas did, "My Lord and my God."

Ver. 15.

Ver. 15. And this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day.—So the devil still supports his kingdom of darkness, and keeps men from the truth by lies and calumnies; no matter how gross. What could be more so than the testimony of men to a fact, which happened when they owned they were asleep.

LECTURE.

ALL the four Evangelists conclude their account of our Lord's birth, miracles, discourses, and death, with the attestation of his resurrection, together with the several proofs and circumstances of it; knowing that, without this, nothing, that they had related of him, would be sufficient to establish our faith in him. And this alone is so firm a ground of our faith, that if we admit the truth of it, every thing else follows of course. For by this "he was declared to be the Son of God with power," *Rom. i. 4.* and his resurrection from the dead is so plain a demonstration of his divine nature and divine mission, that to bear witness to it, to assert and prove it, is mentioned as the sum of the apostolical office, *Acts i. 22.* To which purpose it is remarkable what a noted infidel (Spinoza) said, that he should not hesitate a moment to believe in Christ, if he could believe his resurrection.

But there is something more to be understood and considered in the resurrection of Christ, besides its being a divine attestation to his person, office,

and character, as the Saviour and Redeemer of mankind. For as his death was our death, so that all his members suffered with him upon the cross, and there and then paid the debt of sin in and with him; so his resurrection is their resurrection, all believers being raised together, and quickened in him; he with them, and they in him rising again, and sitting together in heavenly places, where they now are in virtue of his right and title, and whither they must follow him at the time appointed in their own persons, as the harvest of which he is the first fruits. These, strange as they may seem, are the very expressions of scripture; and St. Paul, I conceive, directs us to the precise meaning, and full import of them, when he says, that "as in Adam, all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive," 1 Cor. xv. 22. We die, as being in Adam, who, by his sin, brought death into the world. "Even so," says the apostle, or exactly in the same manner, "in Christ shall all," that is all the just, of whom only and their resurrection he speaks throughout the chapter, "be made alive;" he being the Father of mankind for life, as Adam was for death. Insomuch, that if he had not conquered death in our nature, as the head and representative of it, having all his members in himself, and accomplishing their resurrection at the same time with his own, not one of all the human race could ever have risen happily from the dead, any more than we can vacate the law of death, and exempt ourselves from the necessity of dying, as being the descendants of Adam, and born under the same sentence

fentence of mortality. And from this great mystery of our religion, which is also the great glory and peculiar consolation of it, that "God has gathered together in one all things in Christ," *Eph. i. 10.* that "when we were dead in sins, he quickened us together with Christ, and raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus," to the end we might know that "by grace we are saved through faith," *Eph. ii. 5, 8.* that "He is the head of the body, the church, the beginning, the first-born from the dead," *Col. i. 18.* that "our life is hid with Christ in God," *Col. iii. 3.* and that in union with him, and only as members of his body, we are the children of God, heirs of his kingdom, born again to the power of an endless life, and capable of a blessed resurrection: I say, from hence we may observe,

1. That whereas there will be a resurrection both of the just and unjust, the wicked will be raised by the sole power of God to receive their doom; but the just, as being members of Christ, and one spirit with him, will rise again in virtue of that union, and by the indwelling of the same spirit which raised him from the dead, according to *Rom. viii. 10, 11. 1 Cor. xv.*

2. From hence it appears in what sense chiefly "life and immortality were brought to light thro' the gospel," *2 Tim. i. 10.* Not merely by a positive declaration of the doctrine of immortality from the mouth of Christ, and the repeated, so-

lemn assurances in the New Testament of a future judgment, in order to a happy or miserable eternity; but by his abolishing death, or taking away the sin which would for ever have held us under the sentence of it, and by accomplishing a resurrection from it for all believers in his own person. To all who receive the gospel, the word and testimony of Christ are doubtless a sufficient ground of their belief in the point, as they are of every thing else he has delivered to them, either by himself or his apostles; and it is not denied that his authority is of much greater force to establish the doctrine of a future state than any reasonings or conjectures of men upon the subject could be; and, in fact, has established it in the world far beyond what it ever was before. But, nevertheless, it must be acknowledged that there is a deeper meaning in the words, and that they have a peculiar reference to the great discovery of the gospel here offered to consideration, namely, that therein is revealed the precise *manner* in which a happy immortality was obtained for mankind, and the only way in which it was possible, by Christ's conquest of sin and death. Upon any other supposition St. Paul's assertion can hardly be accounted for, as neither Jews nor Gentiles were ignorant of a future state; and especially if the proof drawn from the unequal distribution of things in this world, the wants and sufferings of some good men, compared with the lot of others, eminently bad, and urged for the necessity of a future adjustment, both before and since the coming of Christ, is of any validity.

We

We need not fear to affirm that it is of none; first, because it supposes what may well be denied, that prosperity in this life is better than virtue, and that God's dealings with those reputed good would be hard and unjust, if he does not make them large amends hereafter. Secondly, and more particularly, because it is founded upon a presumption of merit in man, and bestows heaven upon some as their due, and the necessary reward of their goodness; whereas the gospel strikes at the root of this argument, by expressly pronouncing all to be sinners, liable to a sentence of condemnation, and saved only by grace.

3. From hence, likewise, it appears why Moses did not speak more explicitly of a future state of happiness, and inculcate it more than he has done. He could not, at least not upon its only true or gospel-ground. That was reserved for the gospel-time; and the doctrine of life and immortality could not be declared and preached to the world upon right principles, till sin was expiated, death abolished, and the resurrection of the just effected and insured by the resurrection of Christ.

Upon the whole; it is a very memorable saying of St. John, "he that hath the Son, hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God, hath not life," 1 *John* v. 12. How we have him, and are incorporated into him, and live by him, the scripture tells us over and over again, namely, by faith; and if the work of our redemption is all his own from first to last, and we have no more share

share in it than we had in the creation of our souls and bodies, it is not to be conceived how we can be made partakers of his life, righteousness, death, and resurrection, and of all he has done and suffered for us, in any other way than by receiving it as undeserved mercy, to the glory of God. Dearly beloved, we are come full into the truth, if we can say to Jesus—O glorious head of thy church and people! we believe that thou art the Son of God, mighty to save; and that thou tookest the human nature to be our Father for life and immortality; to purge the sin of it; to raise it from the dead; to carry it up triumphantly into heaven, and sit down in it at the right hand of God. Grant that we may, in heart and mind, thither ascend, and “be steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as we know that our labour is not in vain in the Lord.”

The P R A Y E R.

HOLY Lord God, we desire to prostrate ourselves before thee in a due sense of our vileness, as sinful dust and ashes. We are not worthy of the least of thy mercies, and, behold! thou preventest us with the greatest. Thou hast rescued us by a salvation, which will be the eternal wonder of men and angels. Thou hast redeemed us to thyself by the death of thine own Son, who was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification. In him thou art always well pleased;

pleased ; and because of ourselves we are polluted and unclean in our very best estate, thou hast given him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body ; and in him receivest us to the happy condition of thy children, washed in his blood, clothed with his righteousness, dying, rising again, and ascending with him into heaven, whither he is gone in our nature to take possession of the glory which he hath purchased for us. Lord, we see the exceeding greatness of thy love in the greatness of this mystery, we believe thy word, we adore thy goodness, we rejoice in thy salvation. And as thou hast promised with him graciously to give us all things, we ask of thee to give us a lively faith in this thy mercy ; to kindle the fire of love to thee in our hearts ; to purify our affections ; to confirm us in all holy obedience ; and make us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light ; not for any desert of ours, but for the sake and through the alone merits of Jesus Christ, to whom with thee, O Father, and thee, O Holy Ghost, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and evermore. *Amen.*

SECTION

SECTION LXVI.

E X P O S I T I O N.

St. MATTHEW, Chap. xxviii. ver. 16.

THEN *the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, to a mountain where Jesus had appointed them.*—

This was the most important meeting, for the greatest designs and happiest ends, that ever was in the world.

Ver. 17. But some doubted.—That our faith might be the surer, by their not being over hasty in believing.

Ver. 18. All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.—And in consequence of this power, given to him as man and mediator, he here solemnly commissions the apostles to set up his kingdom in the world, and gives them their instructions in few words, but containing his whole gospel, all the love of God to man, and all the duty of man to God.

Ver. 19. Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations.—Not the Jews only, but all other nations of the world. And in virtue of these words, we of this country, as well as others, have been called into the light of the gospel. Only remember, that this light must be in the heart as well as the book; and if it does not shine there, we are still in the
darkness

darkness of heathenism, without Christ, without hope, and without God in the world.

Ver. 19. Baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.—That is, into the belief and service of the Father sending, the Son sent to redeem mankind, and of the Holy Ghost working faith, and making our baptism effectual. I say, all the love of God to man, and all the duty of man to God, is contained in these words. The God of the Christians, or Trinity of persons in the Godhead, is here revealed to us in their names and offices, as jointly engaged in the work of our redemption, and equally entitled to our adoration; and our baptism in the name of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, is expressive of our duty, and a most sacred bond upon our souls to dedicate ourselves to the worship and service of the Holy Trinity; to embrace the salvation offered us, to live worthy of it, and rest all our hopes upon it.

Ver. 20. Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.—Whatever he gave them in charge to teach, relating either to faith or practice. Therefore what they teach, he teaches, and it is the same thing as if we had it from his own mouth. The doctrine is his; upon his authority we receive it, and to his power it owes all its efficacy. My dear friends, read the bible, read for your souls. It will be in vain to plead ignorance, when you have Christ's wisdom before you, the Spirit to guide you into it, and

fifty-two sabbaths in a year, besides many spare hours at other times, to learn it in.

Ver. 20. And lo, I am with you alway even unto the end of the world.—To bless what they taught in their preaching and writings, to that and to all succeeding generations ; to bless the reading of this gospel and all scripture to you ; to help and save all believers.

—*Amen.*—We verily believe this gospel to be the truth of God, and heartily wish it may be the power of God to our souls. Even so, blessed Lord, grant that the belief of it may operate in us to the end for which it was given, and that acknowledging the Lord Jesus Christ to be the Son of God, dying for our sins, and rising again for our justification, we may trust in him as our only and all-sufficient Saviour, submit to his teaching, die to sin, and rise again to newness of life, and be sealed by the Spirit unto the day of redemption.

LECTURE.

THE gospels and all scripture “ were written that we might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing we might have life through his name,” *John xx. 31.* Life is deliverance from the sentence of death we are under for sin, and restoration to the favour of God, and the happy condition of his children ; in which we stand before him clear of all blame,
and

and have as sure a title to all the blessings of time and eternity as his word and promise can give us. And when we know and confess, from the bottom of our hearts, that we have no such right in and of ourselves, no power to undo the cursed effects of sin ; no repentance that will be available for its own sake, no obedience that we can present to God as the ground of our eternal justification ; but look only to Christ for pardon and life, rely on his atonement, plead his righteousness, trust in his merits, and cast ourselves wholly on the mercy of God for salvation through his name, we are believers. To every soul which has the sentence of death in itself, trembles for its guilt, and comes to him for washing in his blood, he fulfils his promise, " Lo, I am with you alway even unto the end of the world." For to those who receive him as their Saviour, he manifests his presence by his work ; and they may be as sure, from the change wrought in them, by their closing with his word, their love of his salvation, and thankfulness to God for it, that he is with them, in all the compassion of his heart, in all the power of his grace, as if they saw him with their eyes, and heard the words from his own mouth. They were first spoken to the apostles, but in them to all succeeding ministers and preachers of his truth. He brings them now to your remembrance by me ; and you are come happily to the conclusion of this gospel, if what you have heard from it of his birth, life, miracles, death, and resurrection, brings you to him in the belief of this promise, and with earnest desire to experience his presence

in your own souls. For the meaning of his "being always with them" is, that he would bless their labours, and give effect to their teaching; which he does by the power of his Spirit, "opening men's eyes, turning them from darkness to light, and from the power of satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in him." So that the promise, though given to them, was for your sakes, that you might hear and be saved, is now, and always will be, fulfilling to the end of the world. Of his power to fulfil it, by the supply of all your spiritual wants, you can have no doubt; the miracles he wrought are an infallible proof of it; and, as I have often had occasion to observe in the course of our reading, we then make the right use of them, and convert them to our own benefit, when we are convinced by them that he is "the Christ, the Son of the living God, and able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him." Of the love he has for you, and will to save you, let his death bear witness. And, oh! be not wanting to yourselves. Let your own wills, and the desire of your own hearts, be with him in the work of your salvation. Let him not live and die in vain as to you. See yourselves perishing and helpless without him; think what he did and suffered to redeem you from the everlasting death of your souls and bodies; think what grace is offered you, and what glory is prepared for you; come one and all to the Saviour. Know who he is, and what you are. Do not deceive yourselves
with

with thinking and saying, as too many do, that you have a good faith, when you have none at all; but are ignorant of your condition in sin, feel no want of Christ, and were never inwardly stirred up to seek after his benefits. Do not pretend that you do this or that, as if you could save yourselves. Do not say you live quietly and do no harm, or perhaps some good. Say this, and say it truly; but not to keep yourselves blind, not to deny God's charge against you, not to put Christ from you. The word of scripture is, "repent, and be converted that your sins may be blotted out," that is by the blood of Christ. For sin is unknown, and all repentance for it is false, or far short of what it should be, if we think it can be blotted out with any thing else. But is it, can it be so purged? Yes, blessed be God, it is; and if we believe this, our faith will be accounted to us for righteousness. Beloved, this is the great mystery and great glory of the gospel, the joy and life of believers, that we who are unrighteous in ourselves, and always sinners, should be made righteous in Christ. Not to continue in sin, God forbid; but that we may love much, because much has been forgiven us. For the faith by which we believe to the saving of the soul humbles us in the dust, and is also of a converting, purifying nature; and when we know and rejoice in this truth, that "we are saved by grace," as we must if ever we are saved, we shall "give all diligence to make our calling and election sure," and put ourselves without reserve into
 God's

God's hands, that we may be "his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works."

The P R A Y E R.

BLESSED GOD, we are bound to thank thee for the gospel, and for the Saviour therein revealed, and offered to our belief. Give us, we beseech thee, a true knowledge of him, and a lively experience of his continual presence with us. Make us know and feel that there is no other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved; make him our hope and crown of rejoicing, and bring us to him in repentance and faith for all his blessings. Let thy word be our guide to him, and by him to thee, the God of all our mercies. Enable us to say we are thine, thy redeemed, thy children, and joint-heirs with Christ, thy beloved Son, in whom thou art well pleased. Raise up thy power, and come among us, and with great might succour us. Open our eyes to see the things which belong to our everlasting peace; that, knowing thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent, we may give all diligence to make our calling and election sure, adore thy great name, bless thee for thy mercy, serve thee in love, and rejoice before thee all the days of our life, in hope of the glory which shall be revealed in us, through Jesus Christ our only Saviour and Redeemer. *Amen.*

END OF THE EXPOSITION AND LECTURES.

S E R M O N I.

PSALM XC. 11. *But who regardeth the power of thy wrath? for even thereafter as a man feareth, so is thy displeasure.*

YOU are often hearing these words in the course of the Psalms and burial service, and it would be your wisdom to lay them to heart. The displeasure of God! the power of his wrath! who can think of, and believe it, without desiring to avoid it, and using all possible means to secure himself from it? If it is a man like ourselves, we do not willingly provoke his wrath. If it is one who has a right to command us, and power to make us feel the effects of his displeasure, we are cautious of offending him; especially, if we have great obligations to him, and are more particularly bound not to offend and displease him. On all these accounts God is very greatly to be feared; for since he is our maker, preserver, and continual benefactor, requires our obedience, has an unquestionable right to it, and can severely punish in case of disobedience, we should dread nothing so much as to offend him, and desire nothing so much as his favour. But, nevertheless, we know, by woful experience, that this is not the nature and character of man. We see in others, and may feel in ourselves, that the Most High God, notwithstanding the right of his authority, the justice of his government, the greatness of his power, and the countless sum of his benefits,

benefits, is not thought of in the world with reverence and godly fear. We provoke him daily to his face, and, as it were, bid defiance to him with our sins. "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib, but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider," *Isaiab* i. 3. neither Israel then, nor those who are called Christians now. The sun knoweth his time of rising and setting; winds and storms obey him; the sea is bound to its place by a perpetual decree; all the creatures he has made fulfil his word, are subject to his will, and publish his praise by keeping to the order he has established, except men and devils. With them we are associates and confederates in rebellion against him; and, to the shame and reproach of our nature, it is here recorded in the book of truth, that "God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that the imagination of the thoughts of his heart,"—as he was then fallen, and we are now, "was only evil continually," *Gen.* vi. 5. What should be the reason of this dreadful contempt of God? Why do we thus go on from youth to old age, one generation after another, in spite of his sovereign authority, just government, uncontrollable power, and most sacred commands, to set up our own wills against him? It is because men do not, will not know him. Men foolishly and wickedly suppose that the God who made the heavens and the earth is regardless of what passes in the world, or that he is all mercy, and will not punish according to his threatenings. See, I say, whether this thought does not lie at the root of
your

your disobedience, and harden you in an evil way. Whatever you pretend, you do not believe his wrath, and, therefore, it is no wonder you do not fear it. "Who," saith the Psalmist, "regardeth the power of thy wrath?" meaning that the generality make but little account of it; but that, notwithstanding, it is exceeding dreadful, and that those who set themselves in earnest to consider and regard it, can hardly come up to the height of it in thought and imagination; "for even, thereafter as a man feareth, so is thy displeasure," that is, not less than his fears, let them be ever so great. For the transgression of the law of God is sin, and "the wages of sin is death," even death eternal. This is the clear and positive declaration of scripture, to be received and believed with undoubting persuasion on the testimony and word of God. And one great end of scripture is to reveal him to us as just and holy, the hater and avenger of sin, that we may not so presume upon his mercy, as to be fearless of his judgments, and that we may be prepared for that mercy of God in Jesus Christ which we all want, by a penitent acknowledgment of our vileness and condemnation in sin, and a hearty purpose to renounce and forsake it. For then we shall see another meaning in the text, It says, that "thereafter as a man feareth, so is thy displeasure," that is, according as we do or do not fear, consider and lay to heart, the power of God's wrath, we shall be liable to, or avoid it; by not fearing we shall feel the whole weight of it, and our godly fear will as

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certainly prevent it.—I shall, therefore, speak of the words in both these senses :

I. As the express declaration of a wrath in God, equal to, if not far exceeding, any thing we can think or conceive of it ; and,

II. As pointing out to us the way to escape it.

I. The text tells us of a wrath in God, the power of his wrath, a mighty wrath, terrible as all our fears of it can be, or rather far beyond any thing we can think or conceive. Not that there is any such passion of wrath, anger, or fury in God, as we mean by these words, and too often feel in ourselves. You are not so to understand the word wrath, when it is spoken of God. So far as it is attended with trouble, vexation, and torment, it can have no place in the blessed, holy nature of God, and would be contrary to the everlasting, full enjoyment of himself. But his wrath means the effect of his justice, or righteous dealing with us, and its falling so heavy upon us as if it proceeded from the most furious anger ; and the word is used to strike an awe upon our spirits, and that we may so fear as never to feel it. Alas ! we do not. For “ Who regardeth the power of thy wrath ? ” Who can form a just conception of it if he would, and how many never consider it at all, or utterly disbelieve it ? Whatever they do, however they live, though plain commands are broken, and plain duties neglected, they flatter themselves that God regardeth it not, and has
no

no will to punish them. Mercy we all know there is in God, and are but too apt to think there is nothing else; insomuch, that without the light of scripture, we should never have come to the right knowledge of this great, important point of his justice, from the effects of it called his wrath. To the scripture then let us go. For one great end of its being written and put into our hands, I told you, was, that we might know the nature of the God with whom we have to do; and ground our belief of him, not on any blind reasonings, or vain fancies of our own, as we generally do, but on the infallible revelation he has made of himself. The great points which it brings to our knowledge, are the entrance of sin into the world, God's righteous vengeance against it, and the one, sole method of deliverance from the curse of it by Jesus Christ; but the last of these, or the way and means of our deliverance, though it is the comfort, glad tidings, and great glory of the bible, can neither be believed nor understood, if we are not first well grounded in what it declares to us of the great evil and heinous nature of sin, and God's displeasure, the text says, "the power of his wrath," against us for it. And for our full assurance in this matter, and to cause it to make the stronger impression upon our minds, the accursed nature of sin, and God's hatred of it, are not only declared in words, but delivered to mankind in the form of a history, copied, as it were, from the records of heaven, or a publication of God's secret counsels, and differing, in this respect, materially and most

remarkably from all other histories; to the end that reading his judgments against sin, in various instances, in every age of the world, we might see the seal put to his justice, know from what he has done what he will do, believe and dread his threatenings from the actual execution of them, and never presume upon his mercy in opposition to his word. The point, therefore, is God's wrath, or punishment of sin; for, I suppose, I need not tell you that he judges and punishes for nothing else. Let us see what information the scripture gives us concerning it.

The first account of this kind, and almost the first thing we meet with in scripture, is the sin and punishment of Adam. God had said to him, "in the day thou eatest thereof," transgressest the command which has been given thee, "thou shalt surely die", that is, forfeit the covenant of life which has been granted to thee, all right and title to a blessed immortality. And, accordingly, by doing this one forbidden act, he came under the law of death, and with him all his posterity. Now if it was possible for God to alter his purpose, or act contrary to his threatenings in any case, this was the time; if ever there was a sin in the world which called for mercy, and required an abatement in the rigour of justice, it was that one first sin of the first parents of mankind, because all their unborn children were to be involved in the consequence of it. But, behold! it could not be. Stop here, O man; consider this awful transaction with deep attention, and know that eternal justice must

must have its course. The sentence, so far as it related to the death of the body, we know took place against them, and that it will continue in force against every son and daughter of theirs to the end of the world. We may know too, if we please, from the wretched state of corruption and weakness we are in, that the death of the body was not the whole, nor the worst part of their sentence; but the soul, by departing from God, and God's departure from it, lost its true life, and must have been separated from him for ever in the horrors of the second death, without satisfaction made to justice, and recovery to his favour by the grace and power of a Redeemer. And it is farther worthy of observation, that there is little else recorded in scripture of the history of our first parents, than that they sinned, were turned out of paradise and died; to the end we might be sure to take notice of it, and have nothing else to draw off our attention from the truth of God in his threatenings, the accursed nature of sin, and his strict and terrible justice in the punishment of it. If there was not another instance besides this in all scripture of God's judgments upon sin and sinners, this alone is enough to make us tremble, and sufficient warning to the world of the deadly nature of sin, and the curse it brings us under; since we all feel it in the burdens, calamities, and sorrows of life, in our subjection to death, with all the pains and sicknesses which lead to it; and not least in the sickness and corruption of the soul, its perpetual, stubborn opposition to the will of God, in self-seeking, and self-pleasing,
impotence

impotence to good, and strong propensity to evil, But the bible has line upon line for us on this head, and warning upon warning of the wrath, or justice of God, as exemplified in the punishment of sin. This instruction runs particularly through the whole of the Old Testament, is as it were the "flaming sword to keep the way of the tree of life," and will be an eternal bar to it, if some mighty hand does not again open an entrance into paradise for mankind dead in trespasses and sins, and fallen under a sentence of condemnation.

Consider next the universal deluge ; when " God saw that all flesh had corrupted his way before him, and the earth was filled with violence," *Gen. vi. 11, 12, 13.* Noah preached to them for an hundred and twenty years, both in the very action of his building the ark, and also by warnings and exhortations from his mouth, to put them in fear, and persuade them to avert the judgment hanging over their heads ; but when they would not be instructed, " the flood came and swept them all away." Here, you see, was wrath indeed, and the power of wrath. We scarce live a year without hearing of great calamities in some part of the world or other, plague, famine, earthquakes, the miseries of war, and distress of various kinds ; but what are all these put together to that great destruction which was then brought upon the earth ?

And

And though God has promised, for reasons well known to himself, never to destroy the earth again in like manner, that is, universally by the waters of a flood, yet there is no change in his nature and will ; he is the same sin-hating, sin-avenging God for ever and ever. Of which we have another remarkable instance in the case of Sodom and Gomorrah, upon which " the Lord rained brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven, and overthrew those cities, and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground." The reason of which great and terrible destruction we are not left to guess at, but plainly told it was " because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah was great, and because their sin was very grievous," *Gen. xviii. 20.*

So we read of God's giving up the seven nations of Canaan to be destroyed when " their iniquities were full," and of the fore plagues which he sent upon Pharaoh and his servants for the hardness of their hearts. But much the greatest part of the Old Testament is taken up with the history of God's own people the Jews; of whom we read that God delivered them up to their enemies, and sent other judgments upon them, whenever they rebelled against him. And it seems as if they were singled out on purpose to be standing examples, not only of the great and general corruption of mankind under the fall, since notwithstanding the many divine interpositions in their favour, the signal manifestations of God to them, and their superior knowledge of him

him and his law, they continued a disobedient and gainfaying people; but also to be monuments of God's wrath upon sinners; which fell heavy indeed upon them at the last, when their city, Jerusalem, was destroyed, and the whole nation banished from their country, as they are to this day.

I do but just mention these things, and it may be sufficient to shew what I mean, namely, that God will be true to his word, and can be very severe in his punishments. It is true, the examples of God's judgments recorded in scripture, are only examples of his wrath falling upon sinners in this world: And how can it be otherwise? For the punishments of the other are yet to come; of them we can have no account or history, and I pray God we may never know them. You are not, therefore, to suppose that the sufferings we read of in scripture are the whole punishment of sin, and the whole power of God's wrath against sinners. You must not think that the souls of those, who perished in the flood, were drowned with their bodies, or that the men of Sodom are not to "suffer the vengeance of eternal fire." But the use you are to make of these examples is this, that they are full confirmations of the certainty of God's threatenings; and that what we are told of the power of his wrath, in the dreadful torments of another world, will as certainly be executed as the other upon all those who die impenitent and ungodly. I beseech you, disregard them not. See in these examples, which the word of truth holds up to you, who God is, what
sin

sin is, and what you are to look for at his hands, if you will not learn from thence to stand in awe of him. Know that "sin when it is finished," by the full consent of the will, or actual commission, "bringeth forth death," *Jam. i. 15*. Death is the certain consequence, and necessary effect of it, as the birth of an animal, or the springing of a plant is, from its proper seed, in the course of nature; and if Adam had not died upon eating the forbidden fruit, or any soul which sinneth should not come under the law of death, this would be as contrary to the order which God has established, as if no production of things in the world was to follow from their proper causes. The apostle's similitude and expression, of death from sin by a birth, should not pass unnoticed.

But there is one instance in scripture of God's wrath still more awakening than all the rest, and that is the sufferings of Christ. My brethren, how certain, how terrible is his justice, how powerful is his wrath beyond all conception, when it calls to the *sword to awake against the man that is his fellow*, *Zech. xiii. 7*. And what would have been the doom of a world of sinners, if Christ had not bore the whole weight of it for us! What can we think from thence, but that "on whomsoever that stone shall fall it will grind him to powder," if we do not see in his death the desert and punishment of sin, and take warning from it to flee from the wrath to come? Blessed be God that we may, that we have such a refuge provided for us, that he suffered in our stead to save us from

eternal misery, and that if we are taught by him to fear God, we need not fear his displeasure.

II. For I told you that the words of the text may also be understood in this sense, namely, that regarding, considering, and laying to heart the power of God's wrath, is the way to escape it. If we so fear God, as to keep his commandments, and depart from evil, we are sure as his word can make us that, through Christ, we shall be entitled to his blessing and favour. When our Lord says, "Fear him who, after he hath killed, hath power to destroy both soul and body in hell," *Matt. x. 28.* he means that if we do fear him, we are in no danger of that dreadful, eternal fire; which is indeed the sting of God's displeasure, and the very power of his wrath, and what you may suppose the psalmist chiefly meant by saying, *Who knoweth it?* Settle it, therefore, in your minds, that there is no possible way to avoid coming into that place of torments without a religious reverence and fear of God, and conscientious regard to his commandments. And do not deceive yourselves with thinking that you have any lively, stedfast fear of God in your hearts, when you observe only some of his commands, and not others. For a true fear of God will incline you to pay an equal regard to them all; and if you obey any one of them upon right grounds, and from a true principle, because it is God's will and command, you will think yourselves bound, for the same reason, to obey every other. You do not commit adultery; you do not steal;

steal; you are not a drunkard; you do not bid defiance to God with your oaths and curses; but do you love your neighbour as yourself, so as never to defraud, or injure, or impose upon him in a great matter or a small; never to speak or report any evil of him, unless it be to answer some good end? Do you love, or desire to love God, or ever so much as think of loving him with all the heart, mind, soul, and strength, according to the first and great commandment? *First and great* are Christ's words; but to our shame be it observed, what is first in God's esteem, and, therefore, great in the reason of the thing, is last and least in man's; and if we can acquit ourselves to men, in some tolerable degree, with respect to the laws of the second table, we make but little account of the first. Let me ask farther, Do you keep your sabbaths holy to the Lord; not only by a customary attendance on the service of the church, but by keeping your thoughts close to the business of the day, drawing off your minds from other things, and spending it upon your souls, in a godly thoughtfulness, in the reading of scripture, and other religious exercises? And the heart, where God more especially lays his command, and keeps a watchful eye upon it, is that looked to? See now what the amount is of all your fear of God. When his commands do not much thwart your interest or inclinations, you have no quarrel against him or them; in other plain cases you set him at nought, and trample upon his laws.

My brethren, this is not the way to avoid the displeasure of Almighty God; but fearlessness and contempt of his wrath. If we would not have it fall heavy upon us, we must be governed by an uniform, conscientious fear of him, in every action of our lives, in every thought of our hearts, without the least reserve or exception to any one of his commands. And happy it is for us that, sinners as we are, we have a way to escape; and that God himself, "according to the good pleasure of his will, and to the praise of the glory of his grace," has provided the means of our safety, and removed all our fears of his displeasure, if we do but turn to him in repentance, and continue sincere with him in our obedience.

Can you be beforehand with me in what I am to say next? Are you so rooted and grounded in the faith of the gospel, that when you hear of God's displeasure against us for sin, and the power of his wrath, you can turn your thoughts at once to Christ, see all your security in him, and bless God for him? Indeed, my brethren, if we have not the grace given us to look upon Christ crucified as our only remedy, we have great cause to fear; we know nothing as we ought, neither God, nor sin, nor ourselves; neither the greatness of his love, nor the greatness of his anger. If we do not see the power of his wrath, as it fell upon Christ, and take our estimate of it from thence, we have not yet learned to fear it. For in the height of his mercy we read the depth of his justice; and the power of his wrath is fully discovered

vered to us in the manner of our deliverance from it. God would spare us, but he cannot deny himself; and, therefore, Christ must bear the stroke of his indignation, and be given up to death for our offences. And would to God we might see the desert of them in his sufferings, and be in fear for ourselves from a due consideration of the way in which forgiveness comes to us. If there was no other way or means for sinful man to be reconciled to God, and escape his wrath, but by Christ's pouring out his blood upon the cross for the redemption of our transgressions, this is an opening of hell to us as well as of heaven; and herein we have full warning of the curse that will fall upon us, if we do not prevent the danger hanging over our heads, by our repentance and godly fear, and acceptance of mercy.

We are apt to entertain false notions, and have weak apprehensions of the wrath or justice of God, and, from the power of sin in us, are very slow to believe it; but if it had not been satisfied by the death of his Son, we must have felt the power of it for ever in our own persons; and the saying of the text, "there after as a man feareth, so is thy displeasure;" that is, God will not be displeased with us if we do truly fear him, could never have been verified, if Christ had not delivered us from all fear of his displeasure, by being made a curse for us. It is a great word for sinners to hear, "fear not, neither be discouraged;" but if we belong to Christ, we may speak it assuredly to ourselves, for it is the glory and great comfort

fort of the gospel, that *mercy and truth, righteousness and peace, can meet together* in the person of Jesus Christ, and justice have its course in his sufferings, without our punishment. The Old Testament is the book of God's wrath, and the record of his judgments upon sinners, with a glimpse or opening of mercy running through it; the New Testament is the book of reconciliation, pardon, and peace, and the full manifestation of the riches of divine grace to a lost world. But still in agreement with everlasting, unchangeable justice; and if the mercy of it does not work in us to a right end, to make us fear God, it speaks the same truth, and pronounces the same sentence upon us; for *therein* also "the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men," *Rom. i. 18.* "These shall go away into everlasting punishment," are Christ's own words, *Matt. xxv. 46.* And we are told as plainly, as that Adam should die for his disobedience, that "those who know not God," so as to fear him, "and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power," *2 Thess. i. 8, 9.* Let us not, therefore, separate what God hath joined together, but consider the Old and New Testament as two different parts of the same design, one discovering to us the wrath of God for sin, the other his mercy in the pardon of it, and both to the end we may fear him; as we shall, if we know how much it cost to redeem us, and that if we are not made partakers

of

of Christ, by faith making us new creatures, *the word which he hath spoken will judge us at the last day,* and give us up to the power of God's wrath for ever.—The sum of what I have delivered to you on the words of the text is this :

That there is wrath, and a power of wrath in God, very terrible to think of; which because we are backward to believe, and too commonly strengthen ourselves in wickedness by the denial of it, is confirmed to us by the fall of man, and a great many examples of God's judgments upon sin and sinners, recorded in the Old Testament.

That, according to another interpretation of the text, if we fear God, we need not fear his displeasure. For though we have always sin enough, in our very best estate, to put us in fear, considering the justice of God, and the strictness of his law, yet in Christ dying for us we are discharged from condemnation; and if we see the accursed nature of sin in his sufferings, and learn from thence to fear God, we are in a safe condition, may rejoice in him as a reconciled Father, and glory in the New Testament, as the covenant of our peace.

The Lord of his mercy speak to you where I cannot, and fill your hearts with an awful, continual fear and reverence of his holy name. When God saw how great the wickedness of man was upon the earth, it is farther said, “it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it
grieved

grieved him at his heart," *Gen. vi. 6.* Oh ! be not you that man or woman, of whom it may be said, it repenteth the Lord that he made *you*, and that, speaking after the manner of men, it grieveth him for the curse you chuse to lie under, and for the misery which he sees coming upon you. Let Christ remove it from your souls and bodies, and be very thankful that you have such a Saviour in his blood, and that for his sake, whenever you come to him in faith, the sins you repent of will never be remembered against you. God forbid that you should be doing nothing all your lives but "treasuring up to yourselves wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God." Go home, and pray for yourselves that you may have the grace given you to consider the power of it, and so to fear the displeasure of God, as never to have the weight of it fall upon you. And the Lord be with you, in his love, in the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost. *Amen.*

SERMON

S E R M O N II*.

St. MATTHEW, Chap. xvi. ver. 15, 16, 17.

He saith unto them, but whom say ye that I am?

And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.

And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.

THIS one saying of Peter, with the answer of Jesus, is the key to all scripture, the grand design, completion, glory, and comfort of it; and, therefore, it is a matter of the greatest importance to us to be well grounded in it. Take away this, and it has no instruction, no glad tidings, no salvation for you. Know this, and you will have a full opening into the meaning of the whole bible, The fall of man, the curse of sin, and the necessity of redemption from it; the justice, mercy, and love of God; his hatred of sin, his judgments upon sinners, our inability to deliver ourselves, and his will to help and save us; all will break in upon us with a flood of light, and be found to have its full explanation in this one point, that Jesus is *the Christ, the Son of the living*

VOL. III.

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* This sermon was published by the author himself in the year 1776; but as it was printed upon a bad paper, and in a form very different from the rest of his works, it is here republished at the request of some of his friends.

God. The Lord stir you up by means of this text, to look for your portion in him, as the sum and substance of all scripture; and to search it diligently, to the end you may find him therein, as your God and Saviour, to the present comfort and everlasting salvation of your souls.

We read in the foregoing words, that our Lord, in order to draw from the disciples a confession of their faith, asked them what the world thought and said of him, *Whom do men say that I, the Son of man, am?* And when they told him that some said one thing, and some another, but none hit upon the truth, he asked again, *But whom say ye that I am?* To which Peter answered, in the name of them all, *Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God;* thou art that great prophet that should come into the world; anointed, and sent of God to be the Saviour of mankind; and though thou art like one of us, and appearest as a man, and nothing but the Son of man, yet we believe thou art that Son of man spoken of by the prophet Daniel, chap. vii. 13, and *the Son of the living God.* Now then let Christ's answer sink down into your ears, and when you hear it lift up your hearts to God in prayer for yourselves—*blest art thou, Simon Bar-jona; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my father which is in heaven.* O, my soul, how does this affect thee? Art thou seeking after, art thou come to this blessedness? For it is all thine, and belongs to thee as well as it did to Peter, and as sure as Christ spoke it, when thou canst take up the same words, and say
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with the same faith, *thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.*

You see, therefore, that this portion of scripture hath life or death in it, and that we are Christians or not, and shall be happy or miserable for ever, as we do or do not receive it into our hearts. But before I open it to you, I would pray for you and myself; and I cannot do it better than in the words of St. Paul, *Eph. i. 17—23.* “that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may grant unto us the spirit of wisdom and revelation, in the knowledge of him; the eyes of our understanding being enlightened, that we may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power towards them who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, &c.”

I shall now, with the help of God, endeavour to shew,

I. What we are to understand by Peter's confession of faith, *Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.*

II. The blessedness of making it truly, and from the heart; *blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona.*

III. In what way we are brought to it, *for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.*

I. What we are to understand by the words, *thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.* Peter said, The Christ; the Lord's Christ; the holy, anointed one of God; sustaining in himself the three characters of King, Priest, and Prophet, to all which offices among the Jews, those who bore them, were set apart by the ceremony of anointing; that very person promised to Adam in paradise, as the restorer and deliverer of mankind, now fallen in him; revealed to Abraham, as that son of his loins in whom all the families of the earth should be blessed; to David, as the Lord's anointed; to all the prophets, as a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of his people Israel. So that in saying, thou art not only Christ, but *the Christ*, he had a reference to the hope and expectation of the Jews, grounded on a great number of revelations and prophecies concerning him. A remarkable instance of which great point of belief we have in Simeon, *Luke ii.* of whom it is said, that he waited for the consolation of Israel, and to whom it was revealed that he should not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. And when he came by the Spirit into the temple, at the time that the child Jesus was presented there to the Lord, after the custom of the law, he took him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation."

tion." And in the same chapter we read also of Anna a prophetess, that she, coming in that instant, gave thanks likewise to the Lord, and spake of him to all that looked for redemption in Jerusalem. I shall not mention these passages of scripture to you in vain, if they put you upon considering and enquiring whether you have any such belief and rejoicing in the Lord Jesus Christ, as to bless and praise God for him, as they did; yea, to be very thankful that your lot in the world is appointed at a time when Christ is come, and the whole counsel and will of God for the salvation of mankind fully manifested. I am observing that the saints, who lived before Christ, all holy men and women, looked for his coming, worshipped God in the same faith of him, and trusted for acceptance through him, as we do now; only with this difference, that by living after his coming we have the advantage of them in point of clearness and assurance, and shall be more inexcusable if we do not make the right use of it. When Peter, therefore, said, *thou art the Christ*, he spake according to the common belief and opinion, warranted by scripture. Christ was promised and expected as "the seed of the woman who should bruise the serpent's head," or deliver mankind from the power of the devil; and Peter had the grace given him to confess that he who asked him the question, "Whom do men say that I, the Son of man, am?" was himself that Christ, so long promised, and so often foretold.

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But he said more; and God not only guided his tongue, to own that he was the Christ, but to declare, for the belief and assurance of all ages, that he was *the Son of the living God*; God in our flesh, and therefore perfectly qualified for the office of our Redeemer; which he could not have been, if he had not been God as well as man, God and man in one person. The work was great; and if God became man to perform it, we may well conclude that no creature, not the highest angel, not the whole multitude of them, was sufficient for it. And I cannot but think that our comfort, and assurance of salvation by Christ, very much depends on this part of Peter's confession, that he was *the Son of the living God*; and that, according to his name Emmanuel, he was God with us, not only in grace and power, or as the messenger of God's peace to us; but God in our nature, to do that for us which he alone could do. Christ was the Son of man, bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh, that he might redeem man in the same nature which had sinned, and was lost for ever without help; and he was also *the Son of the living God*, God himself, that he might help us effectually, and that in him we might have strong consolation, and rejoice before God all the days of our life, in the hope of complete deliverance. Let us consider, according to the light of scripture, what the condition of mankind is; that from thence we may discern the greatness of our salvation, and form a just conception of the dignity of the person by whom it is accomplished.

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When you see a breathless corpse, do you consider, do you ask yourselves, how it comes to pass that a creature made in the image of God, and designed for happiness, should, after a short life of toil and trouble, pain and sickness, vanity and vexation of spirit, with few and uncertain enjoyments, be given up to death, and laid in the grave to rot and turn to dust? It is the sentence passed upon Adam, the bitter fruit of his disobedience, the curse under which all his children are born. "For as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned," *Rom. v. 12.* that is, by the just judgment of God were reputed sinners, and made subject to death, the punishment of sin. But what is death? Is it the total and final extinction of our being, or the loss only of all thought, sense, and motion for ever? Is this the whole of the sentence to be executed upon us for sin, and does the justice of God extend no farther? When it is said, "The soul that sinneth shall die," *Ezek. xviii. 20.* when St. Paul says, "The wages of sin is death," *Rom. vi. 23.* is nothing meant but the death of the body, or of the whole man, soul and body, never to return to life again? Well would it be for sinners if this was all, if they would take refuge in this hope, poor as it is. But we are told from the lips of truth, that there is a worm which dieth not, and a fire which never shall be quenched; that there is a second death in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone; that there is a time coming when the dead, small and great, shall stand before God in judgment; and those who have not

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risen from their lost state here, "shall go away into everlasting punishment," *Mark ix. 44. Rev. xxi. 8, 20, 12. Matt. xxv. 46.* For though the punishment of sin is first visible in the death of the body, and we see it with our eyes, as a standing, undeniable proof of the truth of God in his threatenings; yet the punishment of the soul is equally a part of his righteous sentence upon sin, and as certain as the other; and though they are separated for a time by the death of the body, yet, if the decree which is gone out against us is not revoked, they must both be separated for ever from God, and reunited to dwell together in endless torments. This is the state of mankind with respect to the sin of the first man, which, we are told, from infallible authority, brought death into the world; and I beseech you attend diligently, and endeavour to go along with me in what I have further to say of our whole state and condition in sin.

You know that we are under a law to God, bound to his service, subject to his authority, made to receive his commands. We are told that "sin is the transgression of the law," *1 John iii. 4.* and cannot but be sensible that if God is the same, and sin the same now that they were from the beginning, the desert of sin is death. What, of one sin? Yes, of every single act of wilful disobedience. From that moment our lives, our souls are forfeited, the curse of the law has overtaken us, and must do its office in delivering us up to almighty justice. Adam's sin was but one, and

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to our apprehension the most pardonable of any, because all his posterity were to be involved in the consequence of it. But, nevertheless, we know, by fatal experience, that the sentence which was pronounced upon him took place, and must for ever have continued in force against him in every part of it, for any thing he could do to reverse it. And what then shall *we* do with our own numberless transgressions? To whom shall we go with the dreadful load of guilt that is upon our souls? What reason have we to stand amazed at our condition, and be fully convinced of the condemnation which is due to us for our offences against the holy, unchangeable God, in our daily breach of his law? For the scripture cannot be broken, and the meek Lamb of God spake it positively with his own mouth, "verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled," *Matt. v. 18*. Fulfilled? Where? How? Not by man; not by the greatest saint that ever lived. And yet every jot and tittle of it must be fulfilled. The obligation of it is sacred and indispensable, as being the law of that God who cannot lie, nor change his purpose, and it was ordained to continue in full force and virtue so long as the world endureth. If we look for acceptance at God's hands solely on account of our obedience, it must be perfect and entire to every command, in every part of our lives; and if his law awards death for disobedience, death it must have. You see then what our condition is by nature, as well as actual transgression; what a desperate evil

sin is, what ruin it brings upon us, and that we are both condemned and helpless. The scripture, which never speaketh in vain, says, we are "dead in trespasses and sins," *Eph. ii. 1.* under a sentence of death for sin, and so dead in sin, that of ourselves we are not able to lift a hand, nor form a wish for our recovery.

But, blessed be God, we are not without remedy. He who made us, will have mercy on us; he hath opened to us a door of hope, and it was a reviving word for us all which Peter said, *thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.* Let us, therefore, from what has been observed of the misery of our condition, and death in sin, now consider what is deliverance and salvation from it, by what means it was wrought for us, in what way it comes to us, and what a sure foundation of trust and hope we have in the greatness and transcendent dignity of the Redeemer. He bore our sins in his own body; he fulfilled the law in our stead, that we might have a perfect righteousness to appear in before God; he conquered death; he carried our nature into heaven. All this was to be done before we could be reconciled to God, rescued from hell, and restored to life and happiness. All this he did, and he alone could do. It is the folly and vain confidence of wretched man, blinded by sin, to presume that it has no such guilt as the scripture charges upon it, and deserves no such punishment as God has denounced against it. And from hence it comes to pass that so little account is made of salvation from it, or
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of our obligations to the Saviour, and that such low and unworthy notions are entertained of his person, grace, and office. But if ever we give way to the discovery of our condition, and take the word of God for our guide, we shall know the mercy of our deliverance to be inexpressibly great, and nothing less than the work of almighty power in conjunction with almighty love.

For Christ, the Son of God, bore our sins in his own body, and with them our punishment; it being inconceivable that he should take them up for any other end than to take them away, to bear the wrath of God for them, to make full satisfaction to his justice, and remove them for ever out of his sight. And this we are told, in the plainest words, he did; "that we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins; that God laid on him the iniquities of us all; that by his stripes we are healed; that by one offering (of himself) he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified;" that is, clean washed in his blood from all spot of sin, *Eph. i. 7. Col. i. 14. Isa. liii. 6. 1 Pet. ii. 24. Heb. x. 14.* He took flesh, and had a body prepared him, that he might sacrifice it upon the cross, and appear in the presence of God for us with his all-atoning blood. He was appointed of God, and willingly offered himself to have the weight of divine vengeance laid upon him for our sins, and the sword of divine justice sheathed in his soul and body, that we might not feel for ever, in our own persons, the hell which he did, when he sweat great

drops of blood, and cried out in the bitterness of his soul, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" All this he endured to redeem us from the guilt and curse of our disobedience, and to discharge us from the debt of eternal punishment by his unknown pains and sufferings. For so great they were as hardly to be supportable by himself; and when we read of them, we have not our eyes opened, if we do not devoutly wish that we may never know them.

This, therefore, was the finishing act of his obedience; and now he made good the truth of that saying, which could only be verified in himself, "that one jot or one tittle should not pass from the law, till all was fulfilled." It must be so, and we know how it was done. When God prescribes a law to us, it is his demand upon us for perfect obedience, and the unalterable decree of his will. Nothing less than the utmost exactness of performance is our righteousness in the sight of God; and if we have not this to plead for ourselves at the bar of his judgment, heaven must for ever be shut against us. Alas! it was, and will be, for any thing we can do to satisfy the rigour of the law, in our very best estate. Do not mistake me here, as if there was no other hope for us; but turn your eyes at once to "Christ, the Son of the living God." That perfection which we all want is to be found in him, as our substitute and surety, doing the whole will of God, not for himself, but in our stead. "Lo, I come," says he, *Psalms* xl. 9. for this very end, to do what none else could; to work

work out, and to offer up a spotless righteousness to God in behalf of the sons of men, always sinful in respect of the purity and full extent of the law, and that in him God might be well pleased with them. "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!" *Rev.* xi. 33. Stand fast here in fulness of belief, as you value your peace. If you are the servants of God, and followers of Christ in holiness, (for I speak now to none else) and would have an answer to put in to all your fears of coming short of the glory of God for the imperfection of your obedience, let your knowledge of Christ revive you; see where your righteousness is, and lay hold on him for your security and comfort. It is a blessed encouragement which we have to this, over and over again, from St. Paul. "The gospel of Christ," he says, "is the revelation of the righteousness of God," *Rom.* i. 17. That which most peculiarly makes the gospel what it is, glad tidings, full relief to mankind sinners, and "the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth," is, that the righteousness of God, not what we bring to him, but receive from him, that which he appoints for our justification, that which he will accept, that only which is so, the righteousness of Christ the Son of God, is therein revealed, offered, and made over to us, as what we must, of all necessity, be found in. If we have it not, if there is no such thing to be had, our case is not a jot the better for Christ; we are still sinners, liable to the condemnation of the law, and lose the great benefit of our faith, so long as we overlook or reject this
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sweet hope, that " as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous," *Rom. v. 19.*

And as Christ thus offered himself, without spot to God, for the redemption of our transgressions, and finished the work of obedience he had to do in our stead; so he conquered death for us, and carried our nature triumphantly into heaven, having satisfied the law in all respects, both by suffering the penalty and fulfilling the righteousness of it. For as " he was delivered for our offences, so he was raised again for our justification," *Rom. iv. 24.* God thereby declaring his acceptance of what he had done and suffered on our behalf, transferring it to us, and as it were putting into our hands the title-deed of our heavenly inheritance. For his members were quickened together with him, in and with him rose from the dead, are set down with him in heavenly places, have their life hid or safely treasured up with him; and when Christ, who is their life, shall appear, then shall they also appear with him in glory. These are the very words of scripture, *Eph. ii. 5, 6. Col. iii. 3, 4.* Great is the mystery, great is the glory, great is the comfort of them. For by them we are assured that " as in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive," *1 Cor. xv. 22*; and that we who are fallen from God by sin into the lowest depth of baseness and misery, shall not only be received to pardon and favour, and the hope of heaven, but in Christ our head exalted, above angels, to a share of that supereminent dignity which

which he, as the Son of man and our representative, is possessed of at God's right hand.

If there is any thing farther needful to be observed concerning the acts of Christ, it is that, in virtue of his obedience and sufferings, his resurrection and ascension into heaven, he sent down the Holy Ghost to guide the apostles he had chosen into all truth, and inspire them with boldness to preach him in the world; to continue always with his church; to reveal him to the hearts of his faithful people; to dwell in us as the author and giver of all grace, and make us the servants of God in holiness.—But of this I shall have occasion to speak more fully under the third head.

See now and consider who he is that performed such mighty deeds for us, and made this happy alteration in our condition. Not John Baptist, not Elias, not Jeremias, nor any of the prophets. They could not help us; they had sins of their own to be forgiven, and wanted the same Christ for themselves that we do. Not an angel from heaven; none of them could redeem us; they could have no blood of sufficient worth to make atonement for sin; they could pay no obedience to God but what was due to him on their own account, and have none to spare for others; they could not overcome death and purchase heaven for us; they could not disarm almighty justice and make a way for mercy to flow in upon us. And, surely, I need not tell you that you could not. No; if you would be wise and hap-

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py, never think of any thing you do, as of value to save you. Know your sin, know your danger, know your miserable weakness, know the defect of all your works, know the Saviour, and confess with Peter, humbly acknowledging your vileness, admiring the riches of divine grace, and thankfully adoring the love which hath done so great things for you, "thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God;" meaning, thereby, that he is God, and, therefore, the strength of our salvation; our Redeemer in his blood, the Lord our righteousness, the resurrection and the life, and the opener of heaven to us; where he is gone to prepare a place for us, and is now at the right hand of God, with full power to bring us thither, and with a supply of all grace in his hands to prepare us for it. For if ever we come to the glory he has provided and purchased for us, we must be prepared for it by him in his own way. If ever we would be partakers of the merits of his death, stand before God in his righteousness, attain to his resurrection, and sit down with him in his kingdom, we must be faithful to his teaching, and receive him for our Lord and King to reign over us, as well as our priest to offer up his blood for the remission of our sins.

What he has done, and he alone could do, to recover us out of our lost state, and raise us from our death in trespasses and sins, has been briefly declared. What he has to do in us, and we must, of all necessity, do for ourselves, will appear under the two next heads. Let us consider,

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II. The blessedness of making Peter's confession truly, and from the heart.

If you believed the curse of sin, and knew the state of your soul while the guilt of sin is upon you, with the same certainty that you read it in scripture, What would you wish for? If you were following after righteousness, in order to find favour with God, and often terrified with the strictness of the law and the sight of your imperfection, what would give ease to your troubled thoughts? If you were tormented with the fear of death, lest it give you up to judgment, and saw heaven shut against you, what would you desire, and think deliverance in the case, but to have it opened to you, and the dread of condemnation removed from your heart and conscience? The necessity, you see, is urgent, help is greatly wanted, and must come from some powerful hand to stand against all your doubts and misgivings. Then look for it where it is to be had. Look unto Jesus, supplying every need, and doing all for you that your souls can desire; living, dying, rising again, and ascending into heaven, and you with him, partakers of all he did, and all he is, when you can say to him with a true faith, "thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Forgiveness, righteousness, peace, victory over sin, death, and hell, grace upon grace, and complete salvation, purchased with his own sweat and blood, without the counsel, will, or help of man; all is yours when you trust in him, and come unto God by him. Is not this blessedness a glorious hope

for sinners, far beyond what we could expect or conceive? Yes; it is joy at the believer's heart, his portion from the Lord, and song of praise. He knows that Christ is the Lord's Anointed for the salvation of his people; that this is the very thing he came from heaven to accomplish, wrought out for us with his labours and sufferings upon earth, sealed to us with his blood, offers to our acceptance, and will certainly put us in possession of, when we own and believe in him for it. I beseech you, know what you believe in him for. Do not expect less from him than he wants to give you; do not diminish one tittle from it, that you may possess your souls in peace, and rejoice in God your Saviour. And that you may stand fast upon this strong foundation of rest and assurance; I say likewise, do not pretend to add to it in the point of justification. Be careful to keep what Christ has done for you, separate in your minds from any thing that he enables you to do for yourselves. What is the reason that we have no more enjoyment of Christ, so little sense of our obligations to him, so little love for him, and do so much less than we might, but because we do not keep our eyes and hearts steadily fixed upon him as "the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world," *John* i. 29; and whatever we say, trust as much or more in ourselves than we do in him? The glory of our salvation is all his own, and he will not suffer it to be stained by any help of ours. He loves to see us walking in the faith of it, and devoted to him in obedience, but our great comfort and ground of rejoicing is
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in himself, as “ of God made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption,” 1 Cor. i. 30 ; and so long as we preserve this hope and unmixed, that he is our Jesus, our life, our all, *we have an anchor of the soul sure and stedfast*, and are so purged in his blood as to *have no more conscience of sins* or trouble of mind on account of them, lest they should rise up against us at the day of judgment. So we are the blessed of the Lord, heirs of his grace, children of his kingdom, and happy in his favour ; and whilst we glory only in Christ, laying all we do at his feet, and humbling ourselves in the dust before him, he says to every believing soul what he did to Peter, “ Blessed art thou.”

But, perhaps, your sins are great, and have been long continued in, and you are ready to harden yourself in wickedness with thinking there is no hope. What ? not in “ Christ, the Son of the living God ?” Is there no hope for you in his bowels, in the sanctity of his life, in the merit of his death, in the might of his Godhead ? What one blessing can you think of, which he has not in his heart for you, and power to bestow upon you ? Why, his business in the world was to save sinners, and he has none but sinners to save. Hear what he saith himself, “ I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance,” *Matt.* ix. 13 ; and by repentance to faith, and by faith to an interest in him. He prayed for his murderers ; and, perhaps, there was not one of the three thousand, converted by St. Peter’s first ser-

mon, who had not joined in the cry against him, and consented to his death. What was it that touched their hearts but the preaching of Christ crucified? And what should hinder any of you from attaining to the same mercy which they did? If your unbelief does not, your sins need not; for his name to all generations is Jesus, the Saviour. He did much, that he might forgive much; and his right and power to absolve the penitent is not less, now he is in heaven, than when he was on earth. Peter's confession will be as pleasing to him from your mouths as it was from his, and he only waits to hear it, to pronounce you as blessed as he can make you. To prevent mistake, and guard the doctrine which has been delivered from abuse,

III. Let us now consider in what way we are brought to it.

The confession to be made in order to this blessedness, the great point on which it turns, is, that Jesus is "the Christ, the Son of the living God;" that is, appointed of God to the office of saving us, and, as God, able to save us. When Peter confessed this, Christ told him, "flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." And I suppose from hence that the same faith is by the same revelation to all; not only, or chiefly, by the use of our own reason or understanding in what we read or hear, but by an inward, spiritual work. For though Peter might have known in some measure that he
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was the Christ, from his miraculous birth, and actions, divine knowledge, authoritative teaching, and holy life, yet he is referred to a higher cause for power to make the confession he did. Outwardly, and with the lips, we may do so too; but making it truly, from the heart, to a change of our state, to newness of life, to the saving of the soul, is by help from God. Observe carefully in what method, and by what steps we come to this confession, and then you may be convinced that help is wanted, and some greater power than our own necessary to bring us to it.

“ Christ, the Son of the living God,” came down from heaven to save a world of sinners, to deliver us from the death and curse we were under for sin, by laying down his life for us. Then there is a depth of evil in sin, and misery annexed to it, far exceeding what we could ever have thought of it, since the Son of God must become man to save us from justice, and suffer the punishment we had deserved. This is one necessary step towards Christ. For without the knowledge of sin, how deadly it is in its nature, and how hateful to God, we can neither understand the necessity of salvation from it, nor the greatness of the Saviour.

But you may be convinced of this in some sort, without ever coming nearer to Christ, or looking out for a remedy. Your own sin, and the desert of it, has that been seen and lamented? Insomuch that you know, with infallible certainty and deep conviction,

conviction, that whoever else is or is not, you yourself are a sinner, guilty of eternal death for your manifold breaches of the law of God, and that Christ must have died to save you from damnation if there had never been another man in the world.

Well, we will suppose you have taken this step too, and are now sensible both of the evil of sin, and of the greatness of your own in particular, and that something must be done to save you from the destruction of it. But where will you go with your sin, and what will you do in this extremity? Will you strive hard to get out of your danger as well as you can by your own endeavours? Or will you take another step forward, go to Christ with your soul, tell him of the danger of your case, and cast yourself wholly upon him for help and deliverance? If you do not, you know your sin to very little purpose, and as little of Christ, as little of yourself, your undone state, and miserable insufficiency, when you would be taking his work of omnipotence into your own hands.

Once more, do not go to Christ for less than you want, and he has to give, I mean, a perfect righteousness. Your own, in the very best state you will ever be in on this side of the grave, when you have done all you can, will be obedience only in part, far short of what he requires of you, and, therefore, upon the whole, no better than sin. You must not think of pleading this before
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God for your justification. You are told that you must "rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh," *Phil. iii. 3.* or any thing you do, as entitling you to the reward of eternal life. If you would be safe, and at rest from all your fears of coming short of the glory of God, you must behold it in the person of Christ, and be grounded in this belief of him, that God "made him who knew no sin, to be sin for us," not only in our sinful nature, but laid the sin of the world upon his head, and gave him to obey and die for our sins, "that we might be made the righteousness of God in him," *2 Cor. v. 21.*

All these points, the evil and damnableness of sin, every man's sinfulness, and the necessity of Christ's atonement and righteousness for all, the scripture reveals to us with sufficient clearness, and in words easy to be understood. But then it also tells us as plainly, that, without a supernatural assistance, they will not be understood, or believed, to any saving purpose. "For the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God," no man does by the strength of his own reason only, "for they are foolishness to him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned," *1 Cor. ii. 14.* To which purpose it is remarkable, that Christ told the disciples, notwithstanding what he had taught them and testified of himself during his abode upon earth, that "it was expedient for them that he should go away," namely, to send down the Holy Ghost, "to teach them all things," as it were over again,
"to

“ to bring all things to their remembrance, whatsoever he had said unto them,” and “ to guide them into all truth,” *John* xiv. 26. xvi. 7, 13. And if they wanted the Spirit to bring to their remembrance, and teach them effectually, what they had heard before from Christ’s own mouth, it is not to be supposed that any now are better qualified or better disposed to receive what they hear, have less occasion for a divine influence to make it light and life in their hearts, or less need to pray for the fellowship of the Holy Ghost.

Consider only how the case stands with us in regard of the several particulars I have already mentioned.

The great evil of sin, and God’s will to punish it, is a fundamental doctrine of scripture; but how little is it attended to, nay, how vehemently do we struggle against it? Put the reason of man to answer the questions, what sin is, or how God shall deal with sinners, and he will make sin in the main a harmless thing, shrink up the notion of God into the single idea of mercy, deride and bid defiance to his justice. That it is so, the general fearlessness of God and of sin testifies against us to our faces; and I beseech you, let your own hearts bear witness to the truth of what I am saying.

Again, it is hard for every one of us to see our own sin; to be convinced of and acknowledge the depth of our fall from God; the pride, sensuality,
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and worldliness of our natures ; the self-will, disobedience, and unbelief, which God in scripture lays to our charge ; our forgetfulness, contempt, and even hatred of God ; in a word, our desert of damnation. You are denying the charge now while I am speaking, flying to vain excuses, and saying within yourselves, every man and woman to clear one, this is hard judging, and unreasonable aggravation of the state of mankind.

And when you do see and acknowledge your sin, you will be for dealing with it in your own strength. You will think of nothing but making your peace with God as well as you can by your own doings, your repentance, your future obedience, something or other that you can call your own. The natural pride of your hearts will keep you to a law-work ; and so long as you can find any thing within yourselves to support you against self-condemnation, the sole remedy of God's providing for sinners, the Lord Jesus Christ, your only hope, will be rejected ; you will not consent to come to him naked and stript of all, as condemned malefactors, for pardon and righteousness.

And do you not now perceive why he said to Peter, " flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee ;" and what reason St. Paul had to affirm, that " no man can say that Jesus is the Lord but by the Holy Ghost ?" *1 Cor. xii. 3.* To confess, from the bottom of our souls, that we are undone sinners, by nature as well as actual transgression ;

that we are snatched as brands out of the fire, and can be saved only by grace ; to receive and apply Christ for salvation, in a full renunciation of ourselves as insufficient for the work : This is the foundation we must be upon for life. And yet, though Christ is so seasonable a mercy to us, such full relief, and so exactly suited to our wants, we do not, we cannot receive him without grace given us from above, and the supernatural working of the Spirit of God, enlightening our understandings, leading and drawing us to him. The feeling of our wants, the unfeigned acknowledgment of them, the desire of help from God, the humility of casting ourselves wholly upon Christ for deliverance, never was the work of any man's own spirit ; and all the calls of God to repent and believe the gospel would be only speaking to the dead, all his promises would be ineffectual, if we were not stirred up by himself to hear and embrace them.

You need not suppose that this is to be done only in a way of *extraordinary* grace, and by God's putting a force, as it were, upon our wills ; tho' he is pleased so to work in some, for the conviction of others, as well as in great mercy to themselves ; and I can hardly think that any are called out of a state of darkness into the marvellous light of Christ, without some knowledge of the hand of God in it. But, nevertheless, the work, especially as to the progress of it, is more generally carried on in secret, and our wills and affections are brought over to God in the use of our
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own reason and understanding, in such a manner as not easily to be distinguished from what he does in us, and to the end we may serve him with full choice and freedom of spirit. And those who, by the benefit of a religious education and the grace of God, have always kept close to him in the faith of Christ, and the sincerity of a pure obedience, would be great enemies to themselves if they questioned the goodness of their state, on account of the Spirit's operation being concealed from them, as to the time and manner of it. Where he does work savingly, it may as certainly be known, as that corn and other fruits of the earth, when they are come to maturity, have had the benefit of rain and sunshine. It is our Lord's own comparison, *Mark* iv. 27, "so is the kingdom of God"—in the world, and in every soul—"as if a man should cast seed into the ground, and should sleep and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how;" that is, as it keeps going forward and attains its full growth imperceptibly, so is a work of grace in the soul. And again, he likens it to the wind, *John* iii. 8. we hear the sound of it, and see an effect, but can give no account how it rises, and where it ends. On the contrary, we may know certainly where there is no effect wrought, nor work of the Spirit, by understanding what it is. It is faith in Christ dying for our sins, making our peace with God, delivering us from eternal death, and opening a way for us into the kingdom of heaven; and the only thing which drives us to him as our refuge, and the Christ of God,

is a penitent humbling sense of our guilt, danger, and misery in sin. The Spirit first shews us of the things of Christ, by revealing them in the scripture; and then, in the use of scripture or the preaching of the word, reveals them to our hearts. This is his office in the world; and he has no way of bringing souls to Christ, but by first convincing them of sin, and then shewing them their want of him for salvation. So that, if you are strangers to any such work as this, if you are ignorant of, or deny, your sin, if you have not been earnestly seeking after Christ to deliver you from it, and do not prize your portion in him as your greatest treasure, and resolve to keep it in spite of all the world, you are in the darkness of unbelief; your profession of Christ is not from any knowledge wrought into your hearts, you are Christians only in name, and “the grace of God, which bringeth salvation,” hath not yet appeared to you.

And now you see the reason why there is so little appearance of Christian practice among us, and why you are such strangers to a life of godliness; why you do not keep your sabbaths conscientiously as unto the Lord; why you do not value and read the scripture more; why you are not oftener upon your knees to God in secret; why you have no prayer or appearance of religion in your families; why you do not come constantly to the sacrament; why the breaking of a commandment is as nothing in your eyes, and you never sit down to examine, as in the presence of God, how your obedience stands with regard to
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any one of them. It is because what you call your religion has nothing of the Spirit in it, but is something which you take up without his rule, and can easily conform to without his help. It is because you have not been made to see the curse of sin, and the extreme danger of your condition, in Christ hanging on the cross; it is because you do not know and consider that he died in vain as to you, if you do not come to him with a faith of the Spirit's working, for healing in his blood. You do not shew your love to him by keeping his commandments, by owning him in the world, by living as his disciples, because you have so little sense of his benefits, and of the greatness of his love to you. Nay, you think lightly, and many speak reproachfully, of the peculiar scripture-doctrine of salvation by faith, from a secret suspicion that it will carry you farther into the depth of your hearts, oblige you to a greater strictness of living, put you upon doing more than at present you find yourselves inclined to, and lay a heavier cross upon you than you are willing to bear. But if you would have hope towards God, or comfort of your religion, see to it that you receive Christ as a Saviour indeed; so lost in yourselves as to perish for ever without him; so helpless in yourselves as to need the aid of an Almighty Spirit to bring you to him in repentance and faith, and keep you faithful to him in obedience and submission to his commands.

For I must now tell you that this is a very precious part of his salvation, necessarily included in
Peter's

Peter's confession of him ; and that if you do not give yourselves up to his teaching and authority, to be renewed by him to the image of God in holiness, you cannot say by the Spirit that he is " the Christ, the Son of the living God." One great end of his coming into the world to die for us, was to shew us the abominable nature of sin, and the death to which it subjects us in the just judgment of God ; certainly, not to make it a less evil in itself, for that we may venture to say is one of the things which God cannot do ; nor to make it appear less in our eyes, or less dangerous than it was before ; but that we might for ever abhor and cast it from us, seeing it could be purged, and the foul stains of it washed out, with nothing but his blood. The scripture will not suffer us to be deceived in this great point. The whole and every part of it, from beginning to end, is a design for holiness ; and it knows of no " grace of God which bringeth salvation," but that " which teacheth us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world," *Titus* ii. 11, 12. You can bear me witness that I so preach Christ, namely, as the Lord and Governor of a willing people, and " the author of eternal salvation to them that obey him," *Heb.* v. 9. I would be very thankful to God for Christ, and know I must receive his salvation as a gift, and not the purchase of my own works ; and am continually advising you to rest your souls upon this belief, that, being " justified by faith, we have peace with God through Jesus Christ our Lord," *Rom.* v. 1 ; but

I could have no hope of being accepted to this blessed peace, if I did not preach him to you and myself as our Lawgiver and Example. His own words are too plain to be denied or disputed, and I pray God write them all in our hearts: "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doth the will of my Father which is in heaven," *Matt. vii. 21.* But besides his authority and positive declarations in the case, many times repeated, the faith by which we believe in him is founded on a supposition of the danger of sin, and the necessity of obedience. Its nature, I mean, in the Spirit's hands, and as wrought in us by him, is to purify the heart, and bring us to a better kind, and higher degrees of holiness, than we could possibly attain without it. I shall endeavour to make you sensible of this in few words, and so conclude.

Faith is looking to Jesus, as "the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world;" believing that he died for it, and that, therefore, we could be freed from the condemnation of it only by the sacrifice of his death. And there is no way of coming to this faith but by repentance, which is the knowledge of sin, sorrow for sin, and a will to forsake sin. And again, Why do we believe that Christ died for this end? How is it possible we should believe on him as appointed by God to deliver us from the guilt and punishment of our sin, if we do not feel it as a load upon our consciences, and dread it as the plague of our natures,

natures, and the bane of our happiness? But if we thus feel and fear it, and heartily repent of it, and know how much it cost to redeem us from it, as we must in order to faith, what shall persuade us to return to it, and resume the curse of it? How is fearlessness of sin, or a purpose of continuing in it, consistent with repentance for it? And if we do not repent of it, what hope can we have of being saved by Christ, or benefit of that faith in him, which supposes that we do truly repent of all sin, requires it of us, and is certainly false if it does not turn our wills against it? You see, therefore, that faith, in the very notion of it, wherever it is true, and a faith of the Spirit's operation, worketh to the destruction of sin, and purifieth the heart.

But it does still more, and has a virtue and power in it to place us upon a right foundation of obedience, and to engage and confirm us in the pursuit of holiness, from a root of love. "We love him," saith *St. John*, "because he first loved us," 1 *Epist.* iv. 19; meaning, that otherwise we do not and cannot, but that, in the knowledge and faith of God's love to us, we have a powerful call to admire the riches of his goodness, and the strongest of all motives to love him again. Our souls lost and redeemed—God sending his own Son into the world to seek and to save us—Christ washing us from our sins in his blood, conquering death and hell, rising triumphantly from the grave, and ascending into heaven for us, that we, wretched sinners, might be partakers of his me-
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rits and heirs of his glory as the children of his bowels—" herein," saith the same apostle, " is love;" unspeakable, almighty love! And again he says, " Behold it!" for it is the Spirit's great argument to the soul to give up all its corruption, all its opposition to such undeserved kindness; his fire in the heart of a believer, to purge it from its dross, to melt down all its stubbornness, and inflame it with love and gratitude to God. And holiness, on this ground, is acceptable to him, the restoration and right frame of our minds, Christ's freedom, whereby, in the spirit of adoption, we cry, Abba, Father, and serve him not with a slavish fear, but with the disposition of dutiful and affectionate children. If you can find any thing besides faith, which thus purifieth the heart and worketh by love, then reject it. And, I beseech you, do not pretend to it if you do not purpose and endeavour to keep the commandments. For, look which way you will, it points to obedience. If sin brings you up to the cross of Christ for pardon, see what a curse there is in it. If you think of the love which he had in his heart for you, when he willingly died upon it to save you from eternal misery, how can you love, how can you retain that abominable thing which shed his blood, which his soul hateth, and which, in pity to yourself, he so earnestly advises you to renounce?

Would you then say as Peter did, truly, and from the heart, with the same faith, by the same Spirit, " Thou art the Christ, the Son of

the living God?" Let this be the meaning of your confession, that he is your life and all your hope. Let it be your constant prayer, that you may acknowledge him as living, dying, and rising again, to reconcile you to God, and redeem you from death, when you could not possibly do it by any work, power, or merit of your own. And let it be your stedfast belief, that if you do not receive him in his commands as your Lord and Governor, you deny him in a necessary part of his grace and office, resist his Spirit, and can have no share in his salvation.

I shall only mention one inference from the whole, and that is, what cause we have to be thankful to God for the promise of the Spirit, to pray for his coming in our souls, and to put them under his guidance. Whilst I was speaking to you of our natural blindness in the things of God, and inability to receive Christ, you might, perhaps, make a handle of it for continuing as you are, and think with yourselves that, if you had not grace given you to believe, you could not help it. But this would be a sad mistake and abuse of the doctrine of the Spirit. You do not think and act thus with respect to your bodies or worldly concerns; when you know you want help, you do not sit still and do nothing, but go to those who you know can advise and assist you. Do as much for your souls. Go to God, and beg of him to send his Spirit to open your eyes and teach your hearts. Read the scripture to put yourself in his way; pray for him, and he will

will come and abide with you, as sure as Christ said, "Ask, and it shall be given you." You should reason thus with yourselves, that if God promises the Spirit, it is because we want him; that what he promises, he will certainly give; and that, if we have him not, we must die unbelievers, and be undone for ever. And he has two ways of manifesting himself to us, and helping us; one is by the words of scripture, the other is by setting it home upon our minds. As he presents the truth to us, so he inclines us to receive it; and as he alone can reveal it, so he alone can work in us both to will and do according to it. Let not, therefore, the disputers of this world pride themselves in their natural knowledge, and set it up against the light of scripture, for it is all blindness and folly; and if they would but once ask themselves whose mind it is they pretend to know, it would be enough to shame them into a confession of their ignorance. Neither let those who receive the scripture think they have nothing to do but to work with it as well as they can in the use of their own understandings; for Christ, the sum and substance of it, will be therein preached and offered to them in vain, without divine illumination and inward teaching, to humble them, to convince them of their sin and weakness, and guide them to him, as "the power of God, and the wisdom of God." Let none plead against their own souls, that they cannot know, believe, and do what is required of them, when they have an almighty Spirit to enable them, nor charge God foolishly till they have

tried what one prayer will do for them. Let the poor and unlearned especially, be thankful that they have such a teacher and assistant in the Spirit of God, and know for their comfort that he can work as effectually in them, as easily bring them to Christ, and make them as wise for heaven, as any others. And let us all take the word of God for our rule, that we may know what we have to do, and how we must be saved, and then we shall pray to the Lord with our hearts, as we do with our lips, that, by his holy inspiration, we may think those things that be good, and, by his merciful guiding, may perform the same, through our Lord Jesus Christ.

SERMON

S E R M O N III.

HEBREWS, Chap. x. ver. 2.

For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged, should have had no more conscience of sins.

THE apostle is here drawing a comparison between the sacrifices of the law and that of Christ, in order to shew the superior excellence and absolute necessity of the latter. Which he does upon this ground; that the offering of the body of Christ, once for all, was sufficient to answer the great end which no other sacrifices could, viz. to obtain the remission of sin in all ages of the world; "he by one offering having perfected for ever them that are sanctified," ver. 14. Whereas the sacrifices under the law, being only representations, or memorials, of the one great sacrifice which was to be offered, were continually repeated; which they needed not to have been, if they had possessed any virtue or efficacy of themselves to take away sins. "For then," says the apostle, "would they not have ceased to be offered?" And the answer is, Yes, they certainly would; and that for the reason here given, "because the worshippers once purged, would have had no more conscience of sins," i. e. no sense of guilt remaining upon the conscience; but instead thereof, peace with God, a happy assurance of his favour, and deliverance from all their fears on account

account of transgression.—My business is with the latter clause of the text, and in treating upon these words, I shall endeavour to set forth the comfortable doctrine implied in them.

I. The purification of the conscience from guilt and fear, through the efficacy of the sacrifice which Christ offered for sin upon the cross, and

II. The influence of this grand gospel remedy upon the temper and conduct of all true believers.

I. We are to consider *the purification of the conscience*, &c. A guilty conscience is the source of all our misery; it poisons every comfort of life, fills us with tormenting fear, and keeps us at a distance from that God who is alone able to make us happy. Hence the first wish of an awakened sinner is to get rid of this load which oppresses him, and to recover the favour of God which is better than life itself. Happy for him that the very relief he wants for his wounded conscience, is the great thing provided for him in the gospel. He is there told that Christ hath suffered for sin, the just for the unjust, and, by the sacrifice of himself, made reconciliation for iniquity. He is assured that, upon his repentance and belief of the truth, all his sins, how many soever, are forgiven. This is the *purging* of the conscience, the *perfecting* and *sanctifying* so often mentioned in this epistle. This is what the same St. Paul calls “holding faith and a good conscience,” 1 Tim. i. 19.
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And again, "holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience," iii. 9. We do this when, in the power of a true faith, we rejoice before God, that he laid on Christ the iniquity of us all; and so transferred the guilt and punishment thereof to him, that we are entirely and for ever released from that debt, may plead his sufferings on our behalf as full payment to justice, and our absolute discharge from condemnation. Thus the conscience becomes *good* and *pure* before God. Thus we are "made perfect, as pertaining to the conscience," *Heb.* ix. 9. Thus our *conscience is* "purged from dead (deadly, damning) works," *ver.* 14. and the "heart is sprinkled from an evil conscience," x. 22. And thus hath Christ "perfected for ever them that are sanctified," so that they have no more conscience of sins; no more dread of wrath, or of God's vengeance against them, than if an angel was to bring them a pardon under the broad seal of heaven. The sin of their nature, and the sins of their lives, are clean wiped out of God's book; every curse is removed from their souls and bodies; the sting of death is taken away; every believer stands before God as a child of his family and kingdom, washed from all spot of sin in the blood of the holy Jesus, whom he puts on in his perfect righteousness, meritorious death, and joyful resurrection. What, my friends? Is it so indeed, that "there is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus?" *Rom.* viii. 1. One sin lost Adam his paradise, brought a curse upon the earth, and death upon himself and all his posterity:

rity : Is not only that sin forgiven to you and to me, if we are his people, but the countless sum of all our own personal transgressions, without exception ? Does the Bible hold forth to us such unlooked-for reconciliation, and is there such a remedy for undone, perishing creatures in all the riches of God's nature ? Yes, blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. The incarnate God, the bleeding Saviour, the Lamb of God's providing, can answer all these questions, hard as they may seem ; and when he cried out upon the cross—*it is finished*—the believing soul knows that all the guilt of his sin expired with that breath, and that the redemption of mankind from sin, death, and hell, was completed then and there upon Mount Calvary. The sword of God's Justice was sheathed in the blood of his Son, never again to be drawn for vengeance against any who run into the arms of the Saviour ; and when the conscience is pained with a sense of guilt, it is authorised to appeal to that act, and plead the blood of Christ for its cleansing. He bore the stroke in and for his people, and they in and with him, by divine appointment, and as members of his body ; so that we that are his flock, suffered together with our shepherd, paid the vast debt we owed, and, by virtue of our union with him, and in God's account, are as clear and innocent as he is.

But, nevertheless, though it is so joyful an article of our faith, so peculiarly the grace of the new covenant, and the chief benefit we have by
Christ,

Christ, so necessary to our being Christians, and gives that ease and quiet to our minds which nothing else can; though, it is a truth, of all others the most important, so often repeated and inculcated for our assurance, and stands so full to view in the words of the text, that the conscience, trusting in the sacrifice of Christ, is purged from its guilt, clear of sin in God's account, and may be as spotless in its own, as if sin had never been committed, yet it is difficult to bring this blessed truth and conscience together. Perhaps there is not any one point of our religion more unknown; or, if known, less enjoyed. For the foundation and chief corner-stone is still too generally rejected, as to its most important office of sustaining the weight of our salvation. The precious blood of atonement is slighted by some—greatly undervalued by others—and even those who know its worth, do not trust in it enough, but suffer their fears to prevail against their belief, to damp their comfort, and hinder their progress.

How great is the number of those in all places, whose lives bear witness against them that they slight the blood of Christ, and though he calls them to wash and be clean, yet chuse rather to wallow in the filth of sin, and continue loathsome spectacles in his sight, than to accept of mercy at his hands! Their sins cry for vengeance; the misery of their condition is greater than can be expressed; he came with bowels of melting pity to rescue and to save them; he gave his life a ransom for theirs; his hands and feet, heart and

head, were all pierced, and his sacred blood poured out, even to the last drop, for their redemption; and yet they despise it, and the language of their hearts is, what have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God? My brethren, do not so wickedly; do not thus trample under foot the blood that was shed for you, do not perish for ever by rejecting such mercy. Come to the fountain opened for sin and uncleanness. For, sinners as you are, there is a fountain opened in his side, and he calls aloud to you from his cross to "behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." And would to God you might begin, from this day, with shame and sorrow, to behold him pierced *by* you, and sacrificed *for* you. I know it is vain to expect attention from any but the humble and penitent sinners. To such I would speak comfortably; and, O Lord, do thou speak powerfully to their hearts. Now that your eyes are opened to see your sin, you will, perhaps, think it is too great to be forgiven; and the sight of your defilement will be apt to strengthen your unbelief, and drive you from Christ, instead of bringing you to him. But remember that he died for sinners, for enemies, and rebels; and the conclusion is good against all your fears, and in spite of the enemy of your souls, that he, therefore, died for such as *you*. Know your desert, plead your unworthiness, humble yourselves before him, come to him in faith, and you may safely leave the rest to him; he knows how to bear the weight of your sins, and make your peace with God. Remember that saying of St. Paul,

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“ it is God that justifieth, who is he that condemneth ? ” Why then should any be so much their own enemies as to condemn themselves ? Remember that this may be said by the greatest of sinners, if they will receive Christ, if they are convinced of sin, and willing to lay it down at his feet ; and so long as there is a God in heaven, or a Bible in the world, they need not give themselves up for lost. Lost ! No ; not till the blood of Christ has lost all its virtue. They may have their consciences purged, and their souls revived, and be happy for ever in the belief of God’s mercy in Christ. The door stands wide open for them ; and nothing can shut it against them but the impenitence and hardness of their own hearts.

Some greatly undervalue the blood of Christ. They have a fair appearance, both with respect to the worship of God, and their conversation in the world ; and they make a merit of it, supposing that God will account it to them for righteousness, and bestow heaven upon them for it. My brethren, your own obedience, if it was a thousand times better than ever it will be, is not, cannot be the purging of your consciences, and that for this plain reason, because at the best it is very imperfect, and far short of the strict demands of the law. And how then can you trust in it, and expect to be justified by it, when, in truth, and in the sight of God, it is no better than sin ? Let me advise you to beware of this mistake, as you love your souls, as you value your peace, as

you would have any joy of Christ, and of the grace which is by him. The question you all have to answer is this—"What must I do to be saved?" If you say, repent and grow better, as God shall enable us, so you must; but let me tell you, this answer is not according to knowledge. St. Paul's answer to this question was, "believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved," *Acts* xvi. 31. And again, he says, "without faith it is impossible to please God," *Heb.* xi. 6. *i. e.* without faith in Christ, as "of God made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption," *1 Cor.* i. 30. In a word, our whole salvation. For he is all, and we are nothing. His unfathomable riches will answer all our wants; his blood will be above the cry of conscience; his peace will quiet the heart; his righteousness will be a glorious covering for our souls. But if, instead of being thus rich and happy in the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, you will wrap yourselves in a righteousness of your own; consider how you will ever be able to make it good. The righteousness which the law approves, and God will accept for its own sake, must be perfect and entire, without flaw or spot of sin, from the beginning to the end of your lives. Have any of you such a one to plead before God? No, you do not say this. But you would gladly hope that you have some degree of goodness, which God will pronounce to be such; so setting one foot at least upon your own righteousness. What then is that goodness, or something like it, which you make the ground of your boasting, and would have it look as great in the eyes

eyes of God as it does in your own? Is it that of loving God with all the heart, reverencing his name, word, sabbaths, and sacraments, owning him in all your ways, praying to him in secret, and setting up his worship in your families? Is it that of loving your neighbour as yourselves, wishing all the good to his soul that you should to your own, doing to him in all cases, fairly and equitably, as you would have him to do to you, and neither speaking nor thinking ill of him? Is it striving, watching, and praying against all sin, resolving to do the will of God sincerely and with a perfect heart, as unto the Lord, never turning aside to the right hand or to the left, nor making any reserve in your obedience? I may come much lower; is there one grace of your soul, one action, one hour of your life, which you think will bear to be tried in God's balance? Verily, we are all concluded under sin; and you now see why we must not put our own doings in the place of Christ, nor join them together with him in the office of justifying us. It is because they cannot justify themselves.

Here then the necessity of some other method of justification forces itself upon us. And if there is one of God's revealing and appointing, let us turn the eye of the soul that way. If all we can do is utterly ineffectual to this end, let us give up all pretensions to it, and thankfully ascribe to Christ the whole glory of making us clean. For he will do it, and he only can. His blood is cleansing; his righteousness is sufficient to answer all

all the demands of law and justice; and blessed be God, that it may be ours by faith. Blessed be God that we have this hope to fly to, and though undone in ourselves, may be "accepted in the Beloved." Abraham was called the friend of God; and yet he looked to Christ for salvation, saw his day and was glad. And of him it is that St. Paul says, "to him that worketh not"—in perfection, or with a view to be accepted on that account before God—"but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly"—as every man upon earth is in the sight of God—"his faith is counted to him for righteousness," *Rom. iv. 5.* David was the man after God's own heart, in respect of his zeal for the true religion and worship; and yet he, knowing his own sin, says, "blessed is the man," mark it well; not who has no sin—but, "to whom the Lord will not impute sin," *Psalms xxxii. 2.* Job had this testimony, that he "was a perfect man and upright, one that feared God, and eschewed evil;" *i. e.* far beyond what the generality of men do. And yet he is represented to us as taking a false measure of his integrity, and standing upon it with unwarrantable confidence before God, And when his eyes were opened, he was struck dumb with the sight of his vileness, and humbled himself before his Maker with this confession, "I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes," *Job xlii. 6.* Cornelius was "a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, and gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway," *Acts x. 2.* And what then? Was this his righteousness in the sight of God?

God? No; he was directed by a vision to send for Peter, "who should tell him words whereby he and all his house should be saved," that is, to preach Christ to him for salvation, xi. 14. Paul, "touching the righteousness which is in the law, was blameless." He had a great zeal for it, and walked so strictly according to it, as to be able to justify himself before men; but after he was struck to the earth with a light from heaven, he was taught to "account all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus," *Phil.* iii. 6—8. Ah! let these examples, which were written for our instruction, and speak so full to the purpose, strike up a light within you, and settle you once for all in the knowledge of Christ, perfecting and sanctifying, justifying and saving you. Do what you will, you will find sure footing no where else. If he does not purge your consciences from dead works, you will either be blinded with self-conceit, and stand before God in the confidence of that greatest of all falsehoods, your own righteousness; or be continually haunted with tormenting fears of his displeasure, on every breaking out of natural corruption, and have those sayings ringing in your ears all your lives, "cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them," *Gal.* iii. 10. "The wages of sin is death," *Rom.* vi. 23. Hear, in a word, what our church says of this matter in the 11th article: "We are accounted righteous before God, only for the merits of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ by faith, and not for our own works

with

works or deservings. Wherefore that we are justified by faith only, is a most wholesome doctrine, and very full of comfort." I pray God fill you with this comfort; and shew you the deceitfulness of every other. Indeed, indeed, my brethren, peace with God by Jesus Christ, and eternal justification by the blood of his cross, is glad tidings for sinful man, and sweet preaching to the distressed conscience, if you were but once laid low enough in your own eyes to receive it, and say with the humble publican, "God be merciful to me a sinner," *Luke xviii. 13.*

I have now told you, on the warrant of the text, how the conscience is purged, what it is that gives relief to our minds when the sense of guilt and of God's wrath for sin lies hard upon us, or what foundation we must be upon for life. Not our own works; they can be no saviours to us. If they were much better than ever they will be, and we were never to commit another sin as long as we lived, they could not blot out the hand-writing that is against us; the best thing we can do, is to give them all up to mercy. I beseech you observe, the apostle says, the sacrifices of the law ceased, because they could not purge the conscience, or set us clear with God. It was necessary that they should give place to something that would, viz. the sacrifice of Christ. It is, therefore, evident, that his sacrifice, and his only, was sufficient for this end, and that by trusting in it, we have remission of sins, and reconciliation with God, peace of conscience and an hope of glory.

glory. If any thing else could have wrought this great effect, or made such a happy change in our condition, we may venture to say the blood of Christ would never have been shed. The opening of the matter is briefly this : As the sin of the first man brought us under a sentence of death and eternal separation from God, so we also learn, from the punishment inflicted on it, who the God is with whom we have to do, and that every other sin, every single sin we commit, subjects us to condemnation. If, therefore, God was to have proceeded with us only and altogether in a way of justice, we must have been undone for ever, and no man upon earth could be saved. And yet his justice is as much a part of himself as any of his other perfections, and must be satisfied : But how could this be without exacting the penalty of sin ? It did this ; but, behold ! at the same time, in a most adorable way of mercy, and so condemning the sin as to spare the sinner. When no other sacrifice of atonement for the sin of the world could be found in earth or heaven, God gave his eternal and only begotten Son to redeem us from the curse and penalty of our sins ; and, what was equally necessary, to work out a perfect righteousness, by his unfinning obedience to the law in our stead, and on our account. And he, by covenant with the Father, and for the joy of redeeming a multitude of lost souls, willingly took the curse upon himself, and came into the world to suffer what we should have suffered, and do what we could not. Hear the words, and let your hearts leap for joy, for they

are very comfortable; "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God," *Psalms* xl. There is great force in that word *I*. Not a man like ourselves; not the highest angel. One of them was sent to the blessed Virgin with the glad tidings of her conception; that was honour enough for him, and all he could do. Not the whole multitude of the heavenly host; they could join in the song of praise for the glory of his humble birth; but none of them could say, with respect to the great work of man's deliverance, "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God." None of them could accomplish it. No, O Jesus, mighty to save, it is thy work and thy praise. And if mercy and truth, righteousness and peace, had not met together in thy person, in perfect harmony with each other; if the blood which was shed for us had not been the blood of God as well as man, we must have been unhelped, unpurged, unsanctified, sad monuments of God's justice, outcasts from his mercy, and for ever unclean in his sight. Blessed be thy grace, blessed be thy love, blessed be thy bowels of compassion, thou didst come; thou didst empty thyself to take upon thee the form of a servant, and become obedient to death, even the death of the cross; thou, who couldst, hast done the will of God, and "by this will we are sanctified," *i.e.* pure in God's sight by his sacrifice, merits, and righteousness. So he hath bruised the serpent's head for the first man, and his fallen, sinful posterity; so he hath blotted out our transgressions, original and actual, as a thick cloud is scattered by the heat of the sun, and vanishes quite out of sight. So, "by
his

his own blood, he is entered into the holy place; having obtained eternal redemption for us," *Heb.* ix. 12. so the heart is eased of its burden, and the purged conscience, instead of being filled with dread and amazement, and "a fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation," rejoices before God in the holiness and merit of that blood; so "God is just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus," *Rom.* iii. 26. so he is "faithful"—to his word and promise—"and just"—to himself and to us—"to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness," *1 John* i. 9. so he is the reconciler of his name, "the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious," and yet, "by no means clearing the guilty; forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin," but at the same time appearing in all the majesty and sovereignty of a Judge and Lawgiver, against sin, *Exod.* xxxiv. 6, 7. laying the punishment of it in full measure upon his own dearly beloved Son for the satisfaction of his justice, and "to the praise of the glory of his grace," delivering him up for us all, because he only could bear it.

II. We are next to shew "the influence of this grand gospel remedy upon the temper and practice of all true believers." It is a precious antidote against the fears of an awakened, guilty conscience; sustains the fainting soul amidst all its weaknesses and imperfections, and is the only remedy we have to fly to when we are so unhappy as to fall into sin. But if we plead it for living in sin, we turn it into poison; it cries against us

for vengeance ; binds every sin upon us, and is the seal of our damnation. Christ's peace is a glorious article of our faith, but can never be peace with sin ; and the scripture knows of no " grace of God which bringeth salvation," but that which " teacheth us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world," *Tit. ii. 11, 12.* It does so teach us ; and I pray God you may observe, and know by your own experience, that it does it with great efficacy. It is the beginning and seed of a new life of holiness ; and the same Spirit which opens the grace of God to the heart, fixes it in a state of willing subjection to him. Faith says, " Lord, what wilt thou have me to do ?" from a sense of its obligations to him, and is powerfully constrained by his love to keep his commandments. And the obedience we pay on this principle is both pleasant to the soul and acceptable to God. When " we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works," we are carried to them with the stream of our inclination, and have the greatest of all satisfactions to know that we serve God with a measure of delight, as well as from a sense of duty. And the service we thus perform is well pleasing to him ; who, as he calls for the heart, accepts nothing at our hands but what comes from thence. See, now, what advantage we have in the faith of Christ crucified, for making all we do a free-will offering to God from the ground of a thankful heart. You that believe the gospel know, that when you must have laid for ever under the weight
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of your sin for any thing you could do to help yourself, God did not take the forfeiture of your soul; he did not give you up to condemnation. He pitied, he spared, he saved you by a great deliverance. He sent his Son in the likeness of your flesh to take the curse of your sin upon himself; he must have died for *you*, if there never had been another sinner in the world; and for the joy of redeeming your soul from death, "he endured the cross, despising the shame." Oh! let me speak a plain word: Where is your love, where is your gratitude? How can you be the basest of all creatures, or come any thing near that severe censure of grieving his heart, and crucifying him afresh, by doing what he hates, taking part with his and your greatest enemy, and cleaving to the sin which forced that astonishing, bloody sweat from him, nailed him to the cross, thrust the spear into his heart, and brought the anguish of hell into his spotless soul? I say, here is all possible advantage for the desire and love of holiness; here is the will's turning to God, and, in the Spirit's hands, the strong bowing of its stubbornness; here is such a call to the heart, and such a sacred bond upon it to love the author of our salvation, and to shew it in the way he so earnestly requires, by keeping his commandments, as no believer can resist. If it were possible that you could have half so many obligations to any man upon earth, you would think yourself bound to make some suitable return, and scorn the imputation of ingratitude, or enmity, to your benefactor. And, therefore, if you can be un-

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moved and insensible where you have received more than tongue can express, or heart conceive ; if you can live in opposition to the known will of your dying Saviour, and in spite of his most affectionate intreaties, it is evident, at once, that you do not believe in him.

In conclusion, hear what St. Peter says, “ as new-born babes desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby.” Now mark what follows ; “ if so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious.” If the grace of Almighty God is pleasant to your souls, as your sole relief from the greatest of all burdens, a conscience labouring under the sense of his wrath for sin ; then, surely, you will not turn back to your former state of guilt, by disobeying and forgetting him, and living unworthy of your high calling ; but will endeavour, above all things, to “ grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.”

SERMON

S E R M O N IV.

EPHES. Chap. i. ver. 19, 20.

And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power; which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places.

THE resurrection of Jesus is the chief cornerstone of our religion, and a principal ground of our faith in him as the Christ, the Son of the living God. If he, who was crucified as a malefactor, had not risen from the dead, we could have had no reason for believing in him as sent of God to be the Saviour of mankind. As he did rise from the dead, he was thereby declared to be the Son of God with power; and our faith in him stands firm on that foundation, and is established beyond all reasonable possibility of a doubt.

This is a most important article of our faith, and as great a stress is laid upon it in scripture, as if it was almost the only point offered to our belief and consideration. When Matthias was to be chosen into the place of the traitor Judas, St. Peter thus declares the nature and end of his office and apostleship: "Of these men which have accompanied with us, all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from
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the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained with us to be a witness of his resurrection." And, accordingly, the apostles, in their preaching and writings, always insist upon it as a capital point of belief; "witnessing both to small and great; saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come, that Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead."

But besides the necessity of establishing this great point of Christ's resurrection from the dead, for the belief and assurance of mankind that he was the Christ, ordained and sent of God to redeem us from sin and death, St. Paul here takes a step farther, and enters deeper into the nature, effect, and power of it; teaching us that *Christ's* resurrection is *our* resurrection; or, that all believers, as members of his body, were raised *in* and *with* him; and that, in right and virtue of *his* resurrection, *they* are known of God as quickened together with him, and set beyond the power of the grave, which can no more hold *them* than it could *him*. For of all such Christ spake these words, "Whosoever liveth, and believeth in *me*, shall never die;"—the meaning is, "they are *already alive* in *him*, to live eternally, by believing;" the death and departure of the righteous out of this world, being only a falling *asleep*; and the state of glory they enter upon, a continuance of that same life which was *begun* in them here. In full agreement with which St. Paul's prayer
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for us is, " that we may know what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places." The opening of the words, therefore, will give me occasion to speak,

- I. Of the peculiar nature, manner, and certainty of the resurrection of believers ; and to shew in what sense, more especially, life and immortality have been brought to light by the gospel.
- II. From hence to take a view of this great work of power, and of the glory of Christ in the accomplishment of our resurrection.
- III. What is to be done in us, and by us, that we may attain to it.

The Lord grant unto us, that we may all make the holy apostle's prayer our own ; and beg of God with the same fervour and earnestness of desire with which *he* prayed for us—" that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto us the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of *him*, the eyes of our understanding being enlightened, that we may know what is the hope of his calling, and what is the glory of his inheritance in the saints."

I. I am to speak of the peculiar *nature, manner,* and *certainty* of the resurrection of Believers ; and to shew in what sense, more especially, life and immortality have been brought to light by the gospel. Observe, it is said, “ the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward,” viz. in respect of our resurrection, “ according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead,” and in him all believers ; for he is speaking of the power of God as exerted for *us*, and working on *our* behalf, as he explains himself a little farther on. Mankind, he says, “ were dead in trespasses and sins,” under a sentence of death temporal and eternal ; in which state they must have continued for ever for any thing they could do to help themselves. “ But God, who is rich in mercy, for the great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus ;” so that the method in which God thought fit to help us, and to release us from the sentence of death, was by raising up the human nature in Christ, that “ as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all,” who believe in him, “ be made alive ;” he being our Father for life, as Adam was for death, and because *he* lives *we* shall live also ; and as one brought us to the grave, and the second death which follows it, so the other brings us out of it. We are “ begotten again, to a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, who, as he was delivered for our offences, so he

was raised again for our justification," or absolute and full discharge from condemnation, because Christ represented us in his resurrection, as he did in his death, and, therefore, one as well as the other is the grace and power of God to us in him ; for it is the power of God *to us-ward* which the apostle here so magnifies. " It was wrought in Christ : " *He*, it is true, was the person raised ; but then it was not for *himself* only, but for *us* ; that *we* might be raised with him. Here, I say, is the point of admiration, and the great work of his power, that God should effect the resurrection of mankind in this method, secure it to us, and seal our belief of it, by the resurrection of Christ. Sinners as we are, we are assured by this, that the grave cannot hold us ; if we belong to him, death is already conquered for us in him ; and with him, by the mighty working of the power of God, *we* are risen again, head and members all together. To which purpose it is said, " if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son ; much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life ; " *his* resurrection to life being for *our* benefit, and as certainly *ours* as it was *his*. For the fuller understanding of this matter, it will be worth our while to take notice of one or two passages more ; from whence it will appear what was St. Paul's knowledge of the resurrection of Christ, and how much is contained in this article of our faith. In his epistle to the Colossians, he says, " Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." They were not dead to the actions and offices of

this worldly life, and laid in their graves ; but the meaning is, that as believers, taken into Christ, and received to a participation of all he was, did, and suffered, they paid the debt of sin, satisfied the divine justice, and were discharged from condemnation by his death, submitted to for their sakes and in their stead, and so appointed and reputed of God. And as they *died*, so they *rose again* with him, and have their " life hid with him," or safely treasured up in him, though it does not now appear to themselves. But " when Christ, who is their life," and who only can be their life, " shall appear, then shall they also appear with him in glory." They must pay the debt of nature, as all other men do, and their corruptible bodies must drop into the dust ; but, nevertheless, they are born again after the power of an endless life ; which, though it is at present hidden from the world and from themselves, they know to be bound up for them in the life of Christ, who is now sitting at the right hand of God. They are so joined to the Lord as to " be one Spirit with him ;" one and the same Spirit belongs to both ; and they are members of that body of which he is the head. As the soul is the life of the body, so Christ and his Spirit are the life of the soul. And though nothing is to be seen in them, as they walk up and down in the world, but what appears in other men, yet they have a life which others have not, in right of Christ ; and in virtue of *that* life are now with him in heaven. Strange as it may seem, the scripture expressly says, of all those

those who are quickened together with Christ, that "God hath raised them up *together*, and made them sit *together* in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." Hear St. Paul once more: "If the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus Christ from the dead, dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead, shall also quicken your mortal bodies, by his Spirit which dwelleth in you." From whence we may observe, that there is this remarkable difference betwixt the resurrection of the godly and the wicked; the latter will be raised by the sole power of God, to hear that dreadful sentence finally pronounced upon them, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into the everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels;" the godly, or all believers, will rise from their graves by virtue of Christ's life, and the Spirit which now dwells in them, as corn and other fruits spring up in their season. By their being in Christ they have the root and seed of a new and heavenly life in them, which, like all other seeds, has a natural power in itself of springing and rising again in God's time, by being laid in the earth. How should it warm and transport our very souls, to think we may be thus raised and quickened together with Christ, that we may have the life of heaven, Christ's own life, begun in us now in a real, though hidden manner; and that when it is in us, we can no more be held under the power of death than he was. What a comfortable security is here given us for the performance of these words of Christ; "I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never

ver perish ; neither shall any pluck them out of my hand !”

And in this sense, more especially, I conceive it is, that “ life and immortality are brought to light by the gospel,” viz. by its revealing the precise manner in which mankind, dead in trespasses and sins, and under a sentence of death, ‘are restored to life, that is to say, *in Christ*, and only in virtue of our union with him. It has been thought a matter of some difficulty to account for the assertion, that “ life and immortality were brought to light by the gospel ;” since the doctrine of a future state was not only believed by the Jews, but generally received and inculcated in other nations. It may, indeed, truly be affirmed, that it was placed in a stronger point of light by Christ and his apostles, than ever it had been before; and *their* authority to all who own it is decisive. But neither that, nor the more clear discovery of the way and means of attaining to a happy immortality, as laid down in the gospel, seem to me to be the thing here intended, as not answering to the plain meaning and full import of the expression. It seems, therefore, to be well explained by the words immediately preceding, which are, “ that Christ hath abolished death,” *i. e.* by his resurrection ; by which he was made a quickening spirit to all his members, and had power given him to give eternal life to as many as the Father had given him. That is the method then of God’s ordaining and appointing to convey life and immortality to us, by the resurrection of our nature

ture in Christ, which is asserted. This, it must be owned, was a new discovery, and is an article peculiarly Christian; and as it is repeatedly delivered by St. Paul as his knowledge of the doctrine of Christ's resurrection, so it is worthy of our attention and belief; gives light to many passages of scripture, and manifests Christ as all in all to us in the work of our salvation.

II. Which leads me to take notice of this great work of power; and of the glory of Christ in the accomplishment of our resurrection.

It is here ascribed to God the Father as his work of power in Christ, and as if Christ was wholly passive in it, and could do no more towards it, than you and I can in raising ourselves from the dead. But, nevertheless, as the actions of the godhead are equally the actions of all the three persons; and Christ is, therefore, said to be quickened and brought again from the dead by the eternal spirit, as well as by the power of the Father; so he arose from the grave by his own power, it being impossible that, as God, he should be holden of it. And when he said to the Jews, "destroy this temple,"—meaning the temple of his body—"and in three days I will raise it up again," he gave them to understand what he afterwards told them, "that he had power" in himself to take his life up again, as well as he had to lay it down, by speaking the breath out of his body. He arose, therefore, and was raised in the power, and by the will of the whole Trinity, ordaining

daining and working life for lost mankind through
 his resurrection, as the first-fruits of that large
 harvest which was to follow in God's appointed
 time, and has ever since been ripening in the
 world. The Lord grant unto us that we may all
 be growing up to it in the belief and experience of
 our quickening to an eternal life by Christ. And
 the single point I would turn your thoughts to,
 under this head, is his glory in the work of our
 salvation; as the author and finisher of it, accom-
 plishing it himself from first to last. Who was
 it that took our nature, that in it he might do the
 will of God, bear our sins in his own body, wash
 out the foul stains, and take away the curse of
 them by the blood of his cross? The Lord Jesus
 Christ. Could you do this by any will, work,
 or power, any repentance or obedience of your
 own? Could you, a sinner in every thought, word,
 and deed, pay the vast debt you owed, provide a
 ransom for your soul, and stop the course of al-
 mighty justice? You have lost the image of God,
 and with it your true life: As the fallen children
 of Adam, you are under a sentence of eternal
 death, and have made that death your own by sin,
 and by your own personal transgressions, every
 day of your lives. Can you reverse that sentence;
 can you raise up yourselves from this death; can
 you restore to yourselves the life you have lost?
 No; but you think, verily, God can; and that
 it is as easy for him to bring your dead bodies out
 of the grave, as it was to breathe into man the
 breath of life, and make him a living soul at the
 first. He can, he will, he has declared his pur-
 pose

pose of doing it ; and you and I, though we must shortly die and be turned to dust, shall stand before his judgment-seat as sure as we are now assembled together ; but you must also know, according to the light of scripture, how Believers in particular are to be raised : If it is to be a happy time to us, and a happy resurrection, we must be of the number of those who were quickened together with Christ ; rise in him from the tomb in which Jesus laid them, and have their life now hid with him in God. For he is “ the resurrection and the life,” in the sense I have already told you, the life of heaven comes to us only by him, and in this manner ; and because we are first alive in him, the Spirit of God taking possession of our souls and bodies, and lying down, as it were, with us in our graves, will raise up all, at the last day, who are to have a share in the resurrection of the just. Christ’s members virtually rose with him all at once ; and, by his right, and their union with him, have the same life in themselves which he has, and can no more die than he can. Behold your hope, your comfort, your safety ; behold the glory of your Saviour : For it is all his, the act of his love, the work of his mighty power ; and when you repeat these words of the creed, “ He rose again the third day from the dead,” remember that *his* rising was *your* rising, *his* quickening *your* quickening, *his* life *your* life ; and that none but those who are made partakers of it, can have the benefit of his prayer, “ to be with him where he is, to behold his glory ;” none can ascend into heaven as their own place,

and stand at the right hand of God, but in the life he has given them, and the power of his resurrection. It is wonderful to think what a difference there is, even now, betwixt Believers and Unbelievers, the children of the kingdom, and the men of this world; far greater than betwixt the brightest star and a clod of earth. The servants of God are sealed, and have his name written on their foreheads; those who are not, get up and lie down, and do all their business in the world, with the devil's mark upon them; in one, God sees the never-dying life of Christ; in the other, death everlasting. O Jesus, it is by thy conquest of death and the grave that any are made alive unto God; it is thy will that all should be partakers of the glory of it, and thou art now calling to all here present to hear the voice of the Son of God and live. Oh! call to us effectually, that we may desire, above all things, to know a passing from death unto life, and give ourselves no rest till we are.

III. In the way of attaining to the power of thy resurrection. Do you inquire what is to be done in us, and by us, that we may attain to it? You must repent and believe the gospel; you must be the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus, and so joined to the Lord as to be one Spirit with him. To be members of Christ, and live by his life, you must be "born again, not of corruptible seed, but incorruptible, by the word of God which liveth and abideth for ever;" you must know a work of the Spirit, "opening your eyes,
turning

turning you from darkness to light, and from the power of satan unto God." You must not think that you are living Christians, because you were born in a Christian country, and baptized in the name of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. You cannot but see with your eyes that very many throw away their baptism, and make it appear, by their sinful or careless lives, that they are no better for it. If you were ever grafted into Christ, you are now broken off from him, withering, dead branches. Neither must you think that all is safe with you, because you lead civil quiet lives; and as you say, do no harm. If you are real Christians, you can say this truly; but then you will not be forward to say it of yourselves, nor give it as your answer, when you are asked a reason of the hope that is in you. If Christ is all in all in your hearts, he will be the first word in your mouths; and what you alledge of your morality, and civil honest living, I fear is nothing but a cover for your ignorance, and little better than saying that you have no need of him.—Others say, "they do as they would be done by," and think they want nothing else. Alas! this is sooner said than done; and such men and women, let me tell you, are very scarce. But I must be plain with you upon the peril of my soul; I make no account of these and other such-like pleas, and look upon them only as pretences for standing off from Christ. See your sin, and your death by sin, and then you will cast a longing eye toward him. Know that, as fallen creatures and breakers of God's law, you are under a sentence of con-

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demnation; and you will be glad to hear of release from it, and restoration to life, and the favour of God by the life, death, and resurrection of his Son. There is a work to be done in you, which you cannot do for yourselves, and yet must, of all necessity, be done. You must see yourselves in another manner than you have done, as perishing and helpless in sin. You must know where help is to be had, and be stirred up effectually to seek after it. You must hear the call of the Spirit in these words, "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." He must be the pearl of great price with you; you must behold him as the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world, and your sin; you must trust in him, venture all your hopes upon him, and resolve to know nothing for salvation but him crucified. Look for such a work as this is at his hands, and you will be united to his satisfaction and merits, received into him as members of his body, clean washed from all spot of sin in his blood, live by his life, and be made partakers of his resurrection.

If you have had the benefit of religious parents and a Christian education, and always kept close to God in the faith of Christ, study of the scripture, and prayer for the guidance of the Spirit, I do not say that your work is yet to begin, or that you stand in need of the same conversion which others do. You would wrong your souls if you gave way to needless fears about the goodness

ness of your state; and I would advise you to thank God for it, and be careful to improve it. But if you have hitherto lived in wilful ignorance of Christ; if you can give no better a reason of your faith than that it is the religion and belief of the country where you was born; if the knowledge of your own case has not been opened to your soul; if the sense and feeling of your wants, as an undone sinner, has not drawn you to him as the Lord your righteousness, and the Redeemer of lost mankind, you are still in the darkness of an unconverted state; whatever you are in other respects, you cannot say in your heart, "I believe in Jesus," and never yet came to him for life. Oh! think *what* you are in such a state; dead in trespasses and sins, without God, without Christ, without the Spirit, without conversion, without hope. Beg of God to make it known to you, and to remove all the hinderances to the coming and life of Christ in your souls. Think what it will be to come to your last hour, without repentance, faith, and holiness, when you are going to be sealed up in your graves, not to rise from them with the life of Christ in you, but to be given up to the second death in the fire which never shall be quenched. Consider, on the other hand, what mercy is offered to us, what a happy change has been wrought in our condition, what glory we may be advanced to, what security we have in the resurrection of Christ for our own, and that by faith in him, and by the same Spirit which raised him from the dead, we are begotten again to his life. When he was risen he said, "Go to my brethren"—

thren"—mark the word, *brethren*—" and say unto them, I ascend to *my* Father and *your* Father, and to *my* God and *your* God," with the fulness of right and compassion for us in his eyes. As he had taken away sin by the sacrifice of himself upon the cross, so he had now destroyed death, and him who had the power of it, *i. e.* the devil, and his victory over all the enemies of our salvation was complete. Heaven was again opened to us, and life and immortality brought to light by the power of his resurrection : For which reason it is, that when St. Paul is speaking of the mighty force there is in the love of Christ, to constrain all that know it to live unto him that died for them, he adds, " and rose again ; " " yea, *rather* that is risen again," as he expresseth himself in another place ; *that* being our assurance that what he did and suffered for us was accepted of God, and that he was made the Lord our righteousness, " because," as he himself says, " I go to the Father." Let it ever be remembered that he carried all his own with him, his children, his brethren, his spouse the church, the members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones ; and that he took possession of heaven in their names, and prepared a place for them there, by the very act of going thither. We little think how much we owe to Christ. The greatness of our obligations to him we never shall know perfectly in this world ; but we might know more, and consider it more than we do. We cannot but perceive that all comes to us through *him* ; forgiveness of sins, peace in life, a happy death, a joyful resurrection, and

and a crown of glory. We would fain make a great matter of *our* repentance, *our* obedience, *our* good deeds, and make God a debtor to us. Why, we must repent, and turn to God, and do the works of our Christian calling; but we can never be our own saviours. Nothing can take away sin but the blood of Christ; nothing that we do can bring his life into us, raise us from the dead, and procure a place for us at God's right hand. None but the second Adam can remove the curse of the first; not such imperfect, guilty creatures as we are. One sin cannot expel the poison, or undo the evil of another; and we should be hard put to it to find one action in our whole lives, which ever passed from us, without some spot of sin on it. God sees our sin, and knows how to deliver us from condemnation; but if we will plead *aright* when we want a *pardon*, we have a fiery trial to go through, and shall know, when it is too late, what need we have of the Saviour, even thee, O Jesus! For it is *thy* name and *thy* praise; and we have only to ask of thee, that thou wouldst send down the Spirit of grace to seal thy salvation to our hearts; to say in us and for us "that thou art the Lord to the glory of God the Father," to raise us from the death of sin to the life of righteousness, to kindle the holy fire of love to thee in our souls, to set our affections on things above, and carry us safely through all the dangers and temptations of our mortal state to the joys which thou hast purchased for us. For unworthy we are of thy name, strangers to thy life, enemies to thy cross, and still unredeemed by thy blood, if we
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are not constrained by thy love to live unto thee. If we lie buried in sin, or the cares of a worldly life, not knowing or valuing what thou hast done for us, nor giving all diligence to make our calling and election sure; if we are prayerless, negligent of scripture, and not redeemed from our vain conversation in the world; if our resurrection with thee, as thy members, does not prove itself by our spiritual resurrection to newness of heart and life, and keep us close to the work which thou hast appointed for us to do, *thou hast told us*, that we can have no part with thee. We have indeed, naturally, neither will nor strength for it; but as thou callest us to it, thou wilt not leave us destitute of help; and sin shall not have dominion over us, because “we are not under the law”—which, by giving us up to condemnation for every sin, is a dead weight upon our souls;—“but under grace”—which makes thy yoke easy, and turns us to God in love, and freedom of spirit in thy service. For thou art the Saviour in all respects; and as thou didst finish the work which the Father gave thee to do, so thou wilt enable us to walk in the way of thy salvation, and make us know in this sense also, “what is the exceeding greatness of the power of God to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places.”

For I would now observe to you that this, viz. God's raising us from our dead state in sin, is
thought,

thought, by many, to be principally intended in these words, or that it is as great an act of power in God to recover us to a state of grace and holiness, as it was to raise Christ from the dead. It seems to me that the words are to be understood as I have opened them to you, viz. as speaking of the mighty power of God to us-ward who believe, in raising up us, sinners as we are, and dead in ourselves, *together* with Christ, in whom we are quickened and now live, and by his life in us shall rise from our graves at the last day, "every man in his own order" and time; "Christ the first fruits; afterwards," in the same manner, by the power of the same Spirit, as parts of the same harvest, "they that are Christ's at his coming." But however we understand the words, certain it is, that, in order to a happy resurrection, our lives must be Christ-like, our understandings must be enlightened from above, our wills must be brought over to God, our hearts must be changed, and our affections set on heavenly things. This is the use which is constantly made by St. Paul of the doctrine of the resurrection. "We are saved by grace through faith," as he tells us, and the resurrection of Christ, for our benefit, could possibly be no work of ours; but this gift of God to us will be believed and received in vain, if we are not his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works. "If ye be risen with Christ," says he, "seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God; mortify your members which are upon the earth: For like as Christ was raised up from

the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." And the improvement he teaches us to make of his discourse on the resurrection, and the victory we have obtained over sin and death through our Lord Jesus Christ, is, "therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoyeable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord." St. Peter also, speaking by the same Spirit, has the same advice for all who live in the Christian hope; and I shall conclude happily with his words, if it pleases God that you should take them into your hearts, "Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things," new heavens and a new earth, or a share in the blessedness of God's people, "be diligent, that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot and blameless, grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; to him be glory both now and for ever." *Amen.*

SERMON

S E R M O N V.

2 COR. Chap. v. ver. 17.

If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.

WE all lay claim to Christ and his benefits. All hope for remission of their sins, peace with God, and ETERNAL LIFE through HIM. And yet, among those who call themselves Christians, and expect salvation by Christ, there is, manifestly, a very wide difference. Some are openly and scandalously wicked; some are careless and unconcerned about their salvation, know little of Christ and his gospel, and will not be persuaded to use the means of knowing more: Some are better instructed; and yet, at the best, have but a form of godliness: Some are awakened to a sense of their condition, and to cry mightily to the Lord for deliverance: Some receive Christ Jesus into their hearts by faith, grow in grace and knowledge, become one spirit with the Lord, and rejoice in hope of the glory that shall be revealed in them. But still, as I said before, notwithstanding this great difference, both of knowledge and practice, all put in for their share of the common salvation. Those who are either vicious in their morals, or totally ignorant of their sad condition by nature, and of the great blessing

and benefit of a Redeemer, as well as those who, with greater knowledge, continue in the main just as they were, and stick at the outside of Christ's religion. All think themselves safe, are uneasy to be told of danger where they themselves suspect none, and resolve to run all hazards rather than look out for a change of their state.

Now the apostle's rule in the text for judging of ourselves, of our interest in Christ, and in the mercies of God through him, is plain, "if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature." Let men think, or say what they please, if they are not new creatures, they are not in Christ. And if they are not in Christ, they must be left to stand or fall for ever by themselves, and will have nothing to appear in before God at the day of judgment but their own worthiness. And then their doom is pronounced already. "For no man cometh to the Father but by him"—to a state of peace and favour with God here, or to his glory hereafter. I do, therefore, purpose, with the help of God, to set this matter before you as plainly as I can.

I. By shewing you what it is to be in Christ.

II. What it is to be a new creature.

III. The necessity of being so. And

IV. That none are, or can be, new creatures, but by virtue of their being in Christ.

May

May the blessing of God go along with us, that what I am saying may prove a word in season to your hearts.

I. *What is it to be in Christ?* It is to believe in him, as the person sent of God to be the Saviour of the world, as the one Mediator between God and man, the great atonement, the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world; and when we come to him in penitence, humility, and a deep sense of our unworthiness, with a full conviction and persuasion wrought into our hearts by the Spirit of God, that without him we are lost creatures, and can by no works, abilities, or attainments of our own, restore ourselves to the favour of God, and rest our souls upon him, as the only and all-sufficient Saviour of sinners, with a lively, thankful sense of God's mercies through him, then we are *in* him; we are received into him as *members of his body*, and have a sure title to a share of his merits and perfect righteousness, as being united to him, and parts of himself; we have a new name and a new nature given to us; we are "born again" of the will of God—our sins are blotted out—our whole state and condition in the sight of God is changed; we are accepted into his covenant of peace, and stand continually before him as children and servants of his family and kingdom, to be filled with all spiritual blessings in Christ. No words can express the greatness and happiness of this change, or the relief it brings to the weary, fainting soul. And if your hearts are unmoved at the preaching
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of such glad tidings, you may be sure you are still in the deadness of your corrupt natures. Your belief in Christ is an empty profession, and your joining in the worship of Christians a fruitless labour, and an unacceptable service. Nothing is alive in you but the old man with his deeds; you have a heart for nothing but the world. As yet you neither are, nor desire to be new creatures; and, therefore, bear witness against yourselves, that you are not in Christ. "For if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature." As no man, who knows what Christ is, and his own want of him, can come to him with any other expectation or belief, than to be raised by him to newness of life; so Christ, who calls him for this very end, will certainly do his own work in him.

II. Let us now consider what this newness of life is, and *what it is to be a new creature*. It is to have the whole bent of our wills, desires, and inclinations turned from earth to heaven, from the world to God. It is to live in dependence upon the Spirit of God; it is to have the mind that was in Christ, and to take him for our pattern in all things, in his meekness, his holiness, his patience, his self-denial, his contempt of the world, his obedience, his universal charity. It is to seek the kingdom of God, and the righteousness thereof in the first place. It is the ordering all our affairs with a view to the recovery of God's image in our souls, as the end for which we were made and sent into the world; and reckoning ourselves happy and prosperous, just in proportion as this
great

great design takes place in us, and wishing and praying continually for the accomplishment of it, so as we wish and pray for nothing else in the world.—In a word, it is being restored to a desire of loving God with all the heart, and every soul of man for God's sake. This is the new creature in Christ, the new man of the gospel; what it calls us to, and proposes to make us. And when once we understand what it is, it will help us to know, infallibly, what is not so; and may serve to convince us how common it is for men to mistake the whole business of religion. Outward services and outward actions compose the religion of the generality of mankind. And if we can make a tolerable shift to keep clear of gross vices, and escape the censure of the world, we think religion has done its work upon us, and have no doubt of the goodness of our state.

Men and brethren, let me speak freely to you. The religion of the bible lies deeper, and goes far beyond all this. It acquaints us that man is a fallen creature; that he has lost that original dignity and perfection of nature in which he was created; when "God saw all that he had made, and behold it was very good:" That he is fallen from the image, the life and likeness of God, into a state of misery and great disorder: That he has nothing but blindness in his understanding, and perverseness in his will: That the imaginations of his heart are only evil continually: That he is guilty of all sins in one, by loving the creature more than the Creator; wanders more and more
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from God, and sinks deeper into corruption, till he is awakened to a sense of his condition, and begins to think in good earnest of returning to his Father's house. And, therefore, no kind of outward behaviour only, no decency of a mere worldly life can reach his case. The cure must go as deep as the malady. And if our sin, in the sight of God, is the alienation of our wills, hearts, and desires from him, they must, of all necessity, be restored to him. If this is the corruption and great curse of our nature, deliverance from it must be the mark we are aiming at. And if we propose any thing less to ourselves, or refuse to go with the Spirit of God into the depth of our hearts, to be convinced by him of sin, to be cleansed from all inward pollution, and renewed again to the life of God, we stand off from gospel-salvation, and have not yet made so much as a beginning in religion. I say it again, we sadly deceive ourselves; the root of the matter is not in us; we are ignorant of the whole ground of our salvation. We do not believe in Christ; we never repented. And though we may justify ourselves before men, *i. e.* behave so as that they have nothing to lay to our charge, yet God, whose eyes are as a flame of fire, searching the heart, seeth that we are ungodly.

Look then, my brother, at your heart, where God looks, and by which alone he judges of you, and ask yourself what it is doing? What is the state, what is the one wish and prayer of it? Does it lose itself in a multitude of vain cares,
contriving

contriving for the world, and setting up its rest here? Does it see and feel no evil in itself, or none that gives it any sensible concern? Does it resist the call of God, and refuse to put itself into his hands, to have the bent of its affections changed? Why then I can easily tell you what is the one great wish and prayer of it. It is that very thing, let it be what it will, which it loves and rests itself upon. It is not God and his goodness. Nay it prays against them; for the bent of the heart is its prayer; and it never, in reality, prays for any thing else, though it repeat ever so many words, either at church or at home, to a contrary purpose.

Suppose now a person to live in the world in high reputation, and who not only does no harm, as all say for themselves, when they can say nothing else, but also does much good; yet if the God that made the heavens and the earth is not the God of his *heart*; if, according to scripture-expression, he does not walk before him under a sensible awe of his continual presence, fearing to offend him, desiring to love him, studying to be like him, and hoping to enjoy him, and undervaluing every thing in comparison of a heavenly frame of mind, whatever he may be in the eye of the world, or however he may pride himself in his character, he is *nothing*, yea he is an abomination in the sight of God. His heart is not right with God. In the main it stands bent against him. Perhaps he never put up one true, earnest prayer in all his life for conversion, or the

blessing of God upon his soul. And if he was to hear the pure gospel preached—"Repent and believe"—it is probable he would make little account of faith, and turn over the rough work of repentance to others, as being very well satisfied with himself, and be more ready to say, "God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are," than to enter into any serious consideration about it. And farther, if any should be so officious as to admonish him, in particular, to look well to himself, to suggest to him that possibly all is not right within; that there is a depth of evil in the heart of man which he little thinks of; that every man has naturally his full share of it; and that no man is likely to have the less of it, for believing and knowing nothing of it, it is probable he would fly out into a rage, and hate and persecute all such as would put him upon suspecting any ill of himself, or endeavour to take him off his false bottom.

This, my brethren, well deserves our attention. Very much depends upon it, even our acceptance or refusal of Christ. O! it is a wonderful discovery which the scripture makes, if we would but understand it, when it tells us that "they which are in the flesh cannot please God;" that "if we live after the flesh we shall die, and that if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." Not meaning by the flesh, only lewdness, gross sensuality, or a debauched, wicked life, as we may be apt to think upon hearing these words, but the whole state and nature of

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man in its present fallen condition, as despoiled of the image of God, and acting only from itself. In this state, the heart of man is a sink of corruption, and odious to God, till it is brought under the workings of his Spirit, to have that great change wrought upon it, which the scripture calls our passing from death unto life. And what can this conversion and newness of life consist in but ceasing to be what we were before, and having new thoughts, new desires, new affections, new resolutions, new actions: So that a man can truly say of himself, "Old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. Whereas I was once, if not a wicked, yet a careless liver, and served God without knowing why I did so—whereas I had cold and lifeless notions of Christ and his religion, and of my own great concern in it, desired nothing for myself so much as ease and convenience, and worldly prosperity; knew nothing of my wretched condition by nature; and instead of humbling myself before him, proudly challenged as high a place in his favour as any one, and never considered the great sin of being given up to the creature, and estranged in my heart and affections from the God that made me to be happy in him; and who, as much as he loves me, can make me happy in no other way: I am now convinced, by the light that is given me, that this was all a time of darkness and sad delusion, and that I was in danger of perishing in it. And, therefore, I embrace God's offer of mercy to me in Christ, as a seasonable relief, and resolve to look well to my interest in him, what-

ever becomes of all my other concerns, and to give myself wholly up to the guidance of his Spirit; to have my soul and body sanctified, and made meet to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light."

This, I say, is a blessed experience, and a great change for the better. This, indeed, looks like the religion of the gospel. Now comes on the time and state of prayer. Now the soul is athirst for God, gives its strength to him, knows that every thing else in comparison is vanity, and less than nothing, and can rest no where but in him. And whatever comes short of this thorough change of our thoughts, wills, and affections, can give us no comfort, nor afford us a well-grounded assurance of God's favour. For though Christ alone is "our righteousness," and when we have done all we can, we have nothing to plead before God for our salvation but his all-sufficient merits and perfect obedience; yet holiness of heart and life is our necessary qualification for happiness, and what we come to Christ for; we receive forgiveness in order to it, and he sends down the Holy Ghost to work it in us; "for without holiness no man shall see the Lord."—But this leads me to shew,

III. *The necessity of being a new creature*: And all scripture proclaims aloud, "that except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." It is just as necessary, as it is for us to be happy in God; for one cannot be without the other. "The end of the commandment is charity, out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and

faith unfeigned." The end of all God's commands to men, and of all his dealings with them, from the beginning to the end of time, is to establish them in the heavenly grace of charity, or a sincere love of God and man, seated in the heart, and working as a living principle. This is our renewal to the image of God; "for God is love." This is the end of God's calling us in Christ, and the end of our coming to Christ, if we know what we come to him for. If we would not deceive ourselves, the foundation of all we expect from him must be laid in repentance, and a hearty trouble for the evil of our state and nature. And when this concern is real, it will necessarily be attended with an earnest, true desire to be delivered both from the guilt and power of sin. As we are convinced that the want of holiness is our misery, our fall, our alienation from the life of God, so we shall look for it at his hands, as a necessary part of our salvation, and receive the forgiveness of our sins from him, as a pledge and earnest of his will to work in us a thorough conversion, as well as a powerful engagement upon us, "to cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit." And if we can come to Christ with any other thought or wish than to be made holy by him, and raised to newness of life, we are yet in our sins. They never were a torment and a burthen to our consciences: And till they are, we can neither desire, nor believe, nor understand his offers of forgiveness. So that in the process of our salvation by Christ, one step depends upon another. One thing necessarily goes before, and necessarily produces

produces another—repentance, faith ; faith, forgiveness ; and forgiveness, holiness. As the first cannot be without a desire of the last, so, if it is sincere, it will certainly be followed by all the rest in God's time and order.

But whatever we may think, or what end soever we may propose to ourselves in coming to Christ, the great design of God is, by him, to recover us to holiness, and restore his image to our souls. As I said before, all scripture declares to us this one thing, that the will of God concerning us, is our sanctification, or such a change of our state, of our whole wills and desires, as may dispose us to seek after and long for God, and choose him as our portion in time and to all eternity ; that so we may be qualified to live in a blessed union and fellowship with him here, and enjoy him for ever in heaven. And this is so necessary in the reason of the thing, that we may as well expect to be saved without salvation, as without holiness, or to live with God, without the life of God in our souls. This world is the time and place allotted us for laying the foundation of heaven in our natures ; and if we do not carry it out of this world with us, we shall never find it in the next. As the tree falls, so it lies. Our desires, whatever they are, will follow us. And our everlasting state will receive us just what the death of our bodies leaves us, either new men in Christ, redeemed by his blood, and sealed by his Spirit, or full of such tempers as can neither enter into heaven, nor enjoy it if they should. For it is a truth spoken by
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all nature, and fully confirmed to us by the experience we have of ourselves, that every thing must have in it the life and nature of that world, or kingdom, in which it lives. Our enjoyments must necessarily be suited to our desires. And if those enjoyments are never so great in themselves, yet they can signify nothing to us—nay, they would be torments to us, so long as our natures stand bent against them, or we desire any thing else in a greater degree.

O! consider this, ye that forget God, who either say to him, depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways, or else pretending to draw near to him, do not walk before him with a perfect heart. Consider whether this is not the reason why God says to every one of us, "My Son, give me thy heart." And again, "Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life;" because whatever has our heart, is our God, let us call or worship what else we please by that name; because, according to our desires, so will it be done unto us. And God himself, with his almighty power and love, cannot be a blessing to us, unless we run out in our affections after him, and can say truly, in the presence of him, unto whom all hearts are open, "Lord, thou knowest that I love thee"—"whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is nothing upon earth that I desire in comparison of thee."

We pretend to keep the commandments, and we know we must do it in some good degree:

But,

But, alas ! what little account is generally made of those of the first table, which relate to God ; and especially of the great, leading command, the love of God. And yet this alone can settle us in a hearty obedience to all the rest ; and without this all the actions of our lives are no better than hypocrisy, and the workings of a deceitful heart. O ! then stop here, my brethren, and let your minds dwell upon this consideration, till the holy fire of divine love begins to have a being in you. You wish to be happy, and God has all the happiness in store which you can desire. He made you in his image to be everlasting partakers of his own felicity, when the whole human race was dead to this image, he sent his Son in our nature to be the restorer of it ; and the eyes of our God and Father are always upon his people for good. But then, at the same time, he kindly warns us not to expect life and blessing from him in any other way than he can bestow, and we receive it, viz. by taking him for the God of our hearts, and returning to him with the whole strength of our desires ; and if we resist this method of salvation ; if we pass through the world without God, or, which is the same thing, without the life of God in our souls ; if we lie down in our graves with nothing but earthly desires and a worldly heart, the mercy of God is at an end with us, and he will neither delight in us, nor we in him, to all eternity.

IV. But who then is sufficient for these things ?
Is all this change a small matter ? And is it in
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the power of man thus to renew his heart, and change the whole bent of his affections? *i. e.* to new make himself. No, no more than it was to make himself at the first. And, therefore, the scripture tells us plainly, “that it is God who worketh in us both to will and to do.” That “without him”—without Christ, “the wisdom of God, and the power of God,” enlightening our understandings and renewing our wills—“we can do nothing.” And those who think they can do great things for themselves, either never tried, or else they are ignorant of their case, and do not know the work that is before them. Dear brethren, if we mistake here, we lose all. We expect light, where there is nothing but darkness; strength, from weakness; and look for health and salvation, where there is nothing but corruption and death. We are *self-sufficient*, and can only be self-saved, *i. e.* miserable, and left to perish by the work of our own hands.

As newness of life is necessary, so it is as necessary that we should put ourselves into the hands of God for it. It is this sense and conviction which brings us to him hungering and thirsting, and casts the soul upon him with all the strength of its desire, for that change which he alone can work in it. It is the knowledge and belief of this, which makes gospel-mercy and gospel-power so welcome and seasonable a relief to us. It is the hearty persuasion and inward feeling of our helpless state in sin, which constitutes the very life and spirit of prayer. And if it is not working at

the bottom of all our prayers, they will be no better than a fruitless, dead formality, and can never work us one jot nearer to God. "Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven." Little children are without strength and without knowledge, weak and ignorant, have every thing to learn, receive what is taught them with undisputing simplicity, and are incapable of thinking, acting for, and governing themselves. Just thus we should judge of ourselves. We are mere children in respect of any knowledge we have of our proper happiness, or ability to attain it. And this child-like, humble disposition is our necessary preparation for receiving the salvation of God: So called, because it is all his gift and his work. And neither the book of our own heart, nor the book of scripture has been opened to us, till we are brought to this conviction—"that we are *his* workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works."

To him then let us go, who is *the way, the truth, and the life*. He hath shewn us the way that we should walk in, by his teaching and example; he hath discovered to us the truth of God and the real truth of our case, and if we receive him into our hearts by faith, he will be all life and power in us; he hath redeemed us by his blood, and will quicken us by his spirit; by him we have again access to the Father, and in him we are accepted; he hath fulfilled all righteousness for us, and by taking us into a blessed union

union with himself, will work all righteousness in us. Indeed, if the gospel had only acquainted us with our condition, and left us to ourselves to mend it as well as we could, we might well lose all heart, and sit down in despair, upon sight of the great difficulty of our work. But when it is all glad tidings, and all comfort to fallen, sinful man ; when God prevents us with his mercy, and calls us to receive a covenant of peace from him in the blood of his Son ; when he engages himself to do his own work in us—"to create in us a new heart and a new spirit, and to make ready a people prepared for the Lord," what should hinder us from putting ourselves cheerfully into his hands, to do for us what he knows to be so necessary, and to receive what he is so ready to bestow upon us ? "If God be for us, who can be against us ?" Let this be the stay of our souls, when they are fainting, at any time, under a sense of their backslidings and infirmities.—"He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things ?" Faith in his mercies ; trust in his promises ; a joyful victory over sin ; a will to obey him ; an heart to love him ; and, in the end, everlasting life. Let us then, through the whole progress of our Christian warfare, cast ourselves upon him in patience and humility ; and let us never be so foolish as to set bounds to his power, or expect less from him than he promises : For if he gives little, or does not give at all, it is because we do not bring along with us the requisite conditions of receiving it, faith and repentance, a

sense of our want of what he promises, and an earnest desire of it. Christ stands over every soul with the same compassion that he did over the impotent man at the Pool of Bethesda, and says, "Wilt thou be made whole?" And if we are not, it is either because we refuse to know our distemper, or have found out some way of our own of healing ourselves slightly, and in both cases reject his assistance; and then we must be content to continue, in the main, as we are, and be what we can make ourselves in our own strength: For as every man that is in Christ is a new creature, so there is no being so without him.

To conclude. It behoves all to enter into a deep consideration, whether we are seeking after salvation by Christ, and have indeed brought our souls to him, to be washed in his blood, and renewed by his spirit, or not: Nor think it strange that I should put you, who are baptized in the name of Christ, and call yourselves Christians, and join in the acts of Christian worship, upon this work; for it is notorious that many, who do all this, are a scandal to the name of Christ, and that very many others, who, though not openly wicked and immoral, yet know nothing of themselves, and of their want of Christ, and, therefore, do not believe in him. Till men are moved by the sight of their corruption and great weakness under it, to pray for the grace of conversion, and cry mightily to the Lord for deliverance, there is nothing but spiritual deadness in them, whatever they may do, or appear outwardly.

wardly. The greatest of all wants is the want of a sense of them. And in the want of this sense, all our religion, all our confession of sins, all our prayer, all our praises, are nothing but a mocking of God, and a deceiving of ourselves. We shall, at the best, only divide Christ, and put in for our share of the forgiveness that is by him, without any desire of his "holiness, without which no man can see the Lord."

"Christ came into the world to save sinners," and he invites sinners to come to him, and must receive men as sinners, if he receives them at all; "for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." And for ever blessed be his mercy that there is "now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus:" But then we are not accepted to the remission of sins, and to a holy fellowship with Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, that we *may continue* sinners. No one, who has looked into the bible, can possibly think otherwise of it, than that it requires of us not only real holiness, but very high degrees of it. And though there is no merit in the highest degree of it, though our whole salvation, from first to last, is of Christ, and no man must think to challenge it at the hands of God for any thing that he is or does; yet real, gospel-holiness, the inward fear and love of God, purity of heart and life, universal charity, and a patient waiting for the kingdom of God, in continual prayer, and longing for the power of the Holy Ghost, is the end of our high calling in Christ, absolutely necessary to our well-being

being as Christians here, and for the enjoyment of that everlasting state of happiness in heaven, which God hath prepared for them that love him. And "blessed are they who thus hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." They shall, in some measure, be filled with what they hunger and thirst after, and find, to their unspeakable comfort, that "the gospel of Christ is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; and that if any man be in Christ, he is, and shall be, a new creature," as sure as the power of God can make him so.

"Now to him that sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb who was slain, and hath redeemed us by his blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and nation, and people, and to the eternal Spirit, by whom we are sanctified, and made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light"—be glory, honour, and power, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

SERMON

S E R M O N VI.

PSALM xvi. ver. 9.

I have set God always before me.

I may venture to recommend this short saying to you as the rule of happiness, the right frame and health of the soul, its present capacity for enjoyment, and the earnest and foretaste of its future perfection in glory. I would not, however, be understood to speak of this happiness, as if I thought it was complete and unmixed; which would be only deceiving ourselves with a vain expectation, and engaging in the pursuit of what is not to be found in the land of the living: For we are in a fallen state, in a world lying under the displeasure of God for sin, and must share in its troubles and calamities. We must be daily spectators of the wants and sorrows of others, and in our turn be wounded with the sharp arrow of affliction, in the pains and sicknesses of the body, disappointment in our best hopes, or the death of friends and relations; and grieve, not least of all, for the sin that dwelleth in us, knowing it to be poison in our blood, the curse of our natures, and the cause of all our miseries; so that, though a prevailing regard to God, steady choice of his will, communion with him, looking up to him in all we do, will be a blessed means of mitigating the greatest evils which can be laid upon us, it will not change their nature; though
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it may lighten our burden, it cannot wholly remove it. In spite of all our efforts we shall find that stoical insensibility is impossible; pain will be painful, and God intends it should be so to answer his ends in sending it; the gout, or stone, will be felt; a sudden reverse of circumstances will put our spirits to the trial; the loss of husband, wife, or child, will extort a cry from us, or make us groan inwardly; and when we have done the best we can to guard against the excess of sorrow and vexation, we can do no more; we must still abide by Job's declaration—"man that is born of a woman, is of few days, and full of trouble."

Neither in stating the account of our happiness, and proposing the words of the text as the rule of it, and the best method of attaining it, would I forget what the scripture emphatically calls our "hope," and "strong consolation," the Lord Jesus Christ. On the contrary, he is comfort indeed! A firm belief in him for the remission of sins, and acceptance to a state of favour and sonship through *him*, is the richest cordial of life; and if we do not lay him for our foundation, a fabrick of our own raising, with no other materials than the stock of nature can furnish, will be light as air, liable to be shaken with every blast of adversity, and nothing but self-flattery and fond delusion. In his school, therefore, we must learn this lesson, as we shall, with great advantage and certainty of success, if we proceed upon scripture grounds. He himself is the very person here speaking, or David of him in the spirit of prophecy,

prophecy—"I have set God always before me; for he is on my right hand, therefore I shall not fall." And as he is our pattern in all things, so we cannot be deceived in following his steps, and adopting the rule of his conduct. What supported him in the great work he had to do, will also support us in ours; and on this ground we may stand as firm, and be as happy as it is possible for us to be in this suffering state of mortality. I say again, suffering state; for so it is represented to us by the pen of an inspired writer, who was himself the most competent witness, and the most striking example in the case that ever lived; and he was directed to deliver his experience to the world in one whole book, (*Ecclesi.*) and to sum up all in a few melancholy words, "all is vanity and vexation of Spirit;" but at the same time to point out to us an excellent means of support, on the same infallible authority—"fear God, and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man;" and, therefore, certainly his happiness.

So then there is hope, there is relief to be had against the pains and sorrows of life. If we have the wisdom to "set God always before us," seeing him at our right hand, living under his eye, taking him into our hearts, and ordering all our thoughts and designs with a view to his approbation, they will be greatly alleviated and sweetened to us in the worst condition of life: If we do not, the best is vain, uncomfortable, and hopeless. We have good warrant for pronouncing this to be the way of happiness, and the divine art of taking

out the sting of that trouble which we must all experience in a greater or lesser degree.

But, say the advocates for pleasure, (at least inwardly and in thought) "we will study nothing so much as the gratification of our senses, and how to possess ourselves of the means of securing that enjoyment. Pretend what you will, there can be no happiness in denying the call, and maintaining perpetual opposition to the strong bent of nature." This thought lies close at the hearts, and governs the lives of much the greatest part of mankind; though common as it is in fact, and general practice, it is too gross to be openly avowed, or spoken in plain words. A sober heathen would be ashamed of it; and a Christian, who purposes and acts thus, and more especially if he pleads for it, is utterly unworthy of the name, plainly contradicts the express doctrine and whole design of the Bible; and, if he persists to the end in this sordid persuasion, lowness of taste, and mean pursuit, lives and dies, I do not say a beast, but ten times worse, a fool and an unbeliever. A mistake in this point must be fatal; and, therefore, an attempt to assist those who are involved in it to recover themselves from their error, is the business of this place. The method I shall take for that purpose will be, not by exposing the several vain pretensions of "the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life;" but to present the opposite truth to their view, that, if it pleases God, they may be struck with the lustre of it, bestow a serious thought upon the
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end they propose to themselves in life, and begin to compute the difference betwixt the name and reality of pleasure.

The Christian says, in imitation of his Lord and Master, whose words I told you they are, "I have set God always before me." He does it in every respect in which the knowledge of God can be useful to him, or subservient to his present and future happiness, that he may act suitably to every relation in which he stands to him, as his maker, preserver, governor, and judge; his greatest friend and continual benefactor; his chief enjoyment in this life, and complete felicity in the next; or, to reduce this copious subject into as narrow limits as I can, "he sets God before him" more especially in his *commands* and in his *love*.

I. In his commands.—The very name of God, at first hearing of it, stamps an absolute authority upon his commands, far beyond those of earthly superiors; and, strictly speaking, the commands of magistrates, parents, masters, are chiefly binding in reference to his will and pleasure, as the fountain of all authority. His right over us is unquestionable; and his justice, wisdom, holiness; his independence, and eternal, infinite enjoyment of himself, all conspire to render his commands sacred, and oblige us to obedience.

1. I say, his absolute sovereignty and supreme dominion over all, are evident and unquestionable. You may be blinded with sense, and enslaved by

evil habits; you may darken and stupify all the faculties of your souls to such a degree, as to forget him, to neglect or despise his commands, and be unconcerned about the consequence of such horrid depravity; but you can never so put out the eye of your reason as to dispute his authority; you cannot say to your hearts if you would, that he has no right to govern the creatures he has made. You may pretend a difficulty of knowing what his will is, or take a step farther in iniquity, and raise a doubt whether he is not an idle spectator of what is doing in the world, or has any will respecting the good or evil of our behaviour; but if you suppose he has, you cannot persuade yourselves but that he intended it should be a law to us. In what manner soever he has declared his will, whether in his word, or by the light of nature, you can never believe that he will suffer it to be resisted and controlled, or that he is the only Being in the world, who is not concerned for truth and justice. When you have done all you can to drive him out of your thoughts, to disregard his authority, and shake off your allegiance to him, he will still have this witness in the conscience, "I am the Lord thy God." And when you hear him saying, thou shalt do this, thou shalt not do that, contradict his will, and be happy if you can.

2. But his sovereign authority and justice are also directed by *infinite wisdom*, which is a very strong reason for our choice of his will, and cheerful submission to his commands. If we were to
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consider him as acting only from mere will and pleasure, and having power to enforce whatever he enjoins, this might strike terror into our spirits, and fill us with a tormenting, slavish awe of him. But we cannot separate his commands from his wisdom, nor does he expect that we should "set him before us" but as the God of all perfection, and with this farther knowledge of him, that we shall be well and wisely governed. Think how unfit it is that a child or a fool should be left to itself, and you will perceive the difference betwixt what God chooses and ordains for us, and our own conduct and management of ourselves, under the influence of head-strong appetites, blind passions, and worldly tempers. Think how eligible and happy it is to live under a wise government, and wholesome laws regularly executed, rather than in a state of wild confusion, where every man is at liberty to do what is right in his own eyes, without law or restraint, and you will have some faint conception of the superior excellence of God's universal government, and the much greater happiness of living in subjection to it. Think of his commands as proceeding from unerring wisdom, and you will see the fitness and necessity of every one of them; you will be convinced that he has revealed and appointed them as the means of our happiness, and feel a secret pleasure in reflecting, that whatever is the state of the country we belong to, whether it is better or worse ordered than many others, it is every man's own fault if he does not live under the best and wisest government in the world.

3. Again,

3. Again, God's commands are, and cannot but be, *holy*. Alas ! this is the great quarrel we have against them. They are too pure for us, and, as striking at the root of that sin which has got possession of our nature, the object of our dislike and aversion. But if we "set him before us at all," it must be as an holy God, hating sin, and willing the destruction of it wherever it is found, or of the sinner for it. The character given of his law is, that it is "holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good." It is the outward manifestation of his nature to us, for our imitation, and as the standard of our perfection and happiness. He is happy only, and for ever, in the contemplation and enjoyment of his own holiness ; and short-sighted as we are, we cannot but discern that the refusal of his commands, and a will contrary to his, must necessarily lead to, and seal us up in, misery. We can entertain no other thought of him but that he demands obedience of us in mercy, for our great benefit, because it is our likeness to him, and the sole way in which we can take delight in him, or have any true enjoyment of ourselves.

4. Especially if we consider once more that he is *independent* of all his creatures, eternally glorious, happy, and perfect in himself ; and as he could have no design in bringing us into being, but that he might communicate his goodness, and make us partakers of his own blessedness, so he reveals his will to us, and requires our conformity to it, for no other reason but that he may conduct

duct us to this end. " If thou sinnest, what dost thou against him? Or if thy transgressions be multiplied, what dost thou unto him? If thou be righteous, what givest thou to him? Or what receiveth he at thine hand?" saith Elihu, in the book of *Job*. Why then, O man, is he so urgent with thee for thy obedience? Why does he call so loudly and affectionately to thee to repent, and turn from thy foolish wanderings, but merely in pity to thee, and because he knows thou art a lost creature in thy own choice? Why does he tell thee of his will, and spread his commands before thee, but that thou mayest take him for thy guide, set him before thee in *them*, and, in so doing, be as happy here as thou canst, and in the way of everlasting happiness?

Sin, which brought death into the world, has not lost its nature, and is sure to plague and punish us. It is bitterness in the cup of life which no art of man could ever sweeten. It is both the worm at the heart, and the rod in God's hand; for there never was a calamity upon earth which must not be placed to its account. Whereas a sensible fear of God will greatly allay the smart of evil; the justice of it will be owned, the use of it will be seen, and comfort taken from this consideration, that it is not only necessary, but tempered with mercy. At all other times and seasons, integrity of mind and conscience is certainly the proper disposition for enjoyment; and we may venture to affirm, that one will always be in proportion to the other. Where it fails, the obedience

ence is outward, constrained, or partial; which as it is not answering the design of God in giving his commands, so we must not expect to have our happiness much promoted by it. If we suffer our hands to be tied, and are kept within bounds by them, it will indeed be better for all about us, and for the world in general. But God, who requires that our obedience should be a free-will offering to him, and knows best in what way it will be beneficial to ourselves as well as others, goes farther with us, and lays his command upon the heart. The man, therefore, who "sets God always before him," looks there too, sets him before his heart, searches it in his presence, strikes at the root of evil in himself, and bends all his endeavours to bring his inclinations over to his duty, in all cases, at all times, with respect to every command. Easiness of natural temper, regard to reputation or worldly convenience, is not satisfaction in the point to him. These are merciful restraints which God lays upon some in the methods of his providence or common grace, but, in the main unsteady principles of action, sometimes holding us in, at other times over-born by the force of temptation, and not the ground of that peace which they have who love the law of God. That foundation is laid much deeper, viz. in renewing, sanctifying grace, and a consciousness of heart that we sincerely and solemnly purpose to do the whole will of God, for the command's sake, for conscience sake, for his sake, and with a single eye to please him; thinking ourselves more especially bound to thank him for commanding

manding us, whatever we do, to do it heartily as unto the Lord, reverencing his authority, pleased with his justice, admiring his wisdom, loving his holiness, and adoring him for his gracious intentions towards us, and the merciful provision he has made for our happiness, purely from the infinite bounty of his nature, he being all-sufficient in himself, and standing in no need of our services. So we set God before us in his commands, and this will be a spring of comfort to us in every condition of life.

II. Let us now observe that we must also set him before us in his *love*. Indeed, if we consider the nature of his commands, what their tendency is, what goodness there is in his design of revealing them to us, and binding them upon us, we have full proof of his love, and abundant cause to rejoice in it, and bless him for it, for acquainting us with what will please him, and obliging us to love him, and to consult the general peace and the quiet of our minds, by loving one another. But his love, as manifested in other instances, is distinct in itself, and worthy of a distinct consideration. In setting God before us, we cannot help keeping our eyes fixed upon his various gifts and numberless bounties: The gift of our lives, and the preservation of them; the sun that shines upon us; the bread we eat, air, earth, and seas, all contributing their several shares to our maintenance and support, and ministering to our delight and comfort—these, and many others, are the common, daily benefits of a

kind providence. And if we consider farther how many wonders concur to furnish us with the smallest thing we want, and what an expence of power and wise contrivance there is in supplying us with a morsel of bread, or one drop of water, insomuch that our thoughts are swallowed up at once in the contemplation; the whole must needs issue in this conclusion, that he who thus *does* good, *is* good; and that such unmerited favours and multiplied blessings can be nothing but the acts and workings of that love which gave us our Beings, and is continually proving itself to our senses by repeated miracles in the support of them. Well, therefore, may we be called upon to set God before us in this respect; to admire, to adore, to praise him; to depend upon him; to sit down contented and easy with our lot; to assure ourselves, at all events, that we are in good hands; that whatever he ordains for us, prosperity or adversity, health or sickness, crosses or the attainment of our wishes, proceeds from the kindest intention, is managed by the most perfect wisdom, and solely the effect of his fatherly care over us, and steady, tender concern for our welfare.

But though the thought, that God is love, and has his eye always upon us for good, has happiness in it far beyond any other, or any different schemes and imaginations of our own, still in the main it is but a glimpse of it. And it must also be acknowledged, that such a disposition of acquiescence and complacency in the divine dispensals is not easy to attain; especially, as the corrupt

rupt state we are in, necessarily requires that it should be penal or corrective ; and, in order to that end, that we should receive evil from the hands of God as well as good. If this difficulty seems great to us, and keeps our minds in suspense concerning the universal goodness of providence, we have help at hand. There is one instance in which the love of God shines forth in all its glory, cannot possibly be mistaken, and is a full solution of all our difficulties : What I mean, is the gift of his Son, and the grace of redemption by Jesus Christ. It is worth our while to understand, and be well grounded in it, that we may set him before us *always*, and *more especially* in the light of scripture, as the God and Father of mercies, receiving us to a covenant of life and peace when we were under a sentence of death, not only for the sin of our first parents, but our own numberless transgressions, enemies to him by wicked works, and without either the power or the will to help ourselves.

Let St. Paul tell you what we are in our present fallen state of corruption and utter alienation from the God that made us, lest I should be thought to represent it in terms too disgraceful to our common nature. "For we ourselves also," says he, the Jews, notwithstanding the advantage they had from divine revelation, without and before Christ, "were sometime foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another," *Tit. iii. 3.* I bring these words of the apostle to

your remembrance for these two reasons ; because I think it must be taken for granted, that every man, who is a stranger to the love of God in Christ, is in the same condition, and here described in his true character, notwithstanding his baptism, and the highest human accomplishments ; and because it is not possible that any man should either form a just conception of that love, or believe it to his own benefit, if he does not first know, in some good degree, the depth of his corruption, and from how great a death it delivers us. But when St. Paul, who, having well studied himself, knew what was in man, had laid this ground of the great and general depravity which cleaves to our nature, he could proceed to build upon it the doctrine of redemption, and display the grace and love of it from a heart warmed with the sense of such inestimable mercy. For thus he goes on : “ But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour ; that being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.” The words are short, but clear and wonderfully comprehensive ; and contain matter of such comfortable import to our present and future happiness, as may well engage the most serious attention of our whole lives, and are enough to make any heart leap for joy. They present to our view the whole work and office of the

the Trinity in our redemption, the love of God, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the power of the Holy Ghost; and set God before us, that we may set him before ourselves, as the God in whom we are to rejoice now, and with whom we are to live for ever, which, indeed, is the crown of all, the anchor of the soul in the tempestuous sea of the world, and its chief support against temptations, doubts, and fears from within, and troubles from without. And, therefore, it behoves us more especially to set God before us in this respect, and to keep a steady eye upon the end of our course, knowing, assuredly, that we have an eternal inheritance reserved for us in heaven, and that if we make God our hope and wish, our confidence and the strength of our hearts, he himself will be our portion and exceeding great reward.

Hear how St. John, learned in the same school, and guided by the same inspiration, delivers his thoughts of the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward the fallen race of mankind: "Behold," says he, speaking of it with wonder and great astonishment, behold, "what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we"—we poor worms of the earth, sinful dust and ashes, vile and abominable, lost and ruined in ourselves, that we—"should be called," that is, actually be, "the Sons of God;" joint heirs with Christ, the Son of his love, entitled to all the blessings of his family and kingdom, and received to the hope of seeing him in his glory. So sweetly does the disciple, who lay in his master's bosom, touch this string of love in the apostolic concert; for so they
all

all speak with one consent. Not from any acquired knowledge of their own, for they were in the lowest class of mankind, unlearned and ignorant; but by the light of heaven shining into their souls, and in direct opposition to the wisdom of the world, and all the pride of human attainments. The Spirit was their teacher, and Jesus all their knowledge; Jesus crucified, and rising again; Jesus our great High Priest, Mediator and Advocate with God; Jesus the Redeemer, first stripping us of every plea of worthiness, or title to justification in ourselves, and then saving us by himself; Jesus our all, the Lord our righteousness, dying for us, and living in us; he whose "name is Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace," *Is. ix. 6.*

O glorious, infinitely kind, all-saving, all-healing Jesus! O happy, happy thought! that sin shall neither condemn us, nor have dominion over us; that though always imperfect in ourselves, we have relief from the anxiety of conscience in thy merits, and shall be *accepted in the beloved*, *Eph. i. 6.* Turn the eye of your soul this way, look stedfastly upon the love of God thus wonderfully manifested on your behalf, and if you have any knowledge of the curse of sin and of your own sinfulness, any wish for deliverance, any feeling or idea of gratitude, any thought of living and dying a happy man, it will turn your whole heart to him, set you all on fire to make him such returns of love as he requires of you, engage you to think of him with delight, and inspire you with

a holy resolution of setting him alway before you. See a full proof of what I am saying, and such a lively picture of devotion and clear affection to the Saviour, as nothing but a sense of pardoning love could excite, in the woman who anointed his feet, washed them with tears of repentance and joy, kissed them in humble adoration, and wiped them with the hairs of her head, *Luke vii.* And observe our Lord's testimony to the effect and natural consequence of the forgiveness of your many sins; "for," says he, "she loved much." So will you, when you are burdened with your sin, desire his cleansing, and are established in the faith of it. Then whatever God enjoins will be sweetened and endeared to you. You will set him before you always, in all his perfections of justice, wisdom, holiness, to imitate, to praise him, and see a fitness and beauty in his commands which you never perceived before.

Have you any experience of such a change, and is this your state now, while I am speaking? Not consisting in outward acts of customary worship, or duties without regard to God: There is no life, no ground of rejoicing in this; but is it the inward principle, full thought, and steady purpose of your soul, to set him always before you, that you may be guided by his commands, influenced by his love, keep up a constant communion with him, and make every step of your life a nearer approach to the everlasting enjoyment of him? Surely you have found out the great secret of being as happy as you can be, in a disordered, calamitous world,

world, where all must suffer, be sick, and die, and may pass through it contented, unhurt, well pleased, because you have found God in it, because Christ has reconciled him to you, and because you have a hope full of immortality. If you are poor, or more afflicted than many others, you will study to be resigned, submissive, and even thankful; knowing that your lot is well chosen, and dispensed to you as the very thing you want, and firmly believing that "all things shall work together for good to them that love God." If you have an uncommon measure of prosperity, and great abundance of outward things, you will take care that all around you shall be the better for it, and keep a strict watch over your heart that you do not fall by it, as thousands and ten thousands do, nor turn it into a curse to yourself by putting it in the place of God, devoting it wholly to pleasure, and giving full scope to every vanity of life. You will abhor the thought of injustice, hard dealing, or oppression of any kind; set God before you in every man you meet, and be ready with the thought of what his case requires of you, and how God expects you should behave towards him. And more especially, you will be a diligent, conscientious reader of scripture, to the end you may set God before you, according to his mind and will therein revealed, and from a full persuasion of your blindness, and utter incapacity to know him in any other way; praying withal for light, direction, and steadfastness, and wondering at the ignorance and bold presumption of those, who, at the same
time

time that they would be thought to set God before them, neither love his word, nor know what it is to open the heart to him in prayer, for the heart and for spiritual blessings. I say, so think, so purpose, so do, so look up to God in the faith of Christ, and what should hinder you from living and dying in peace?

We may, indeed, make a shew of drawing nigh to God, honour him with our lips, and be constant, or even zealous, in his worship, without finding any such effect from it as I have been speaking of; but this only proves that our religion is pretence and formality: For if we set him always before us in truth and reality, in the settled frame of our minds, and with full purpose and devotion of heart, this disposition carries happiness in the very nature of it. Our confidence in him will be a blessed support to us when all other comforts fail us; and whatever our temptations, difficulties, or troubles are, it will afford support in proportion to its strength and assurance; especially as it will be attended with this knowledge, that it is the result of faith and prayer, and the work of his Spirit in us. On the other hand, can you entertain a thought, can you frame a wish, of being happy or easy in opposition to the will of God? What is the cause of all the disorders in the world, kingdoms, neighbourhoods, families, of inward disquiet, perpetual restlessness, multiplicity of vain pursuits, and certain disappointment, but that we do not set God before us, nor choose to be governed by him? Why

does the hour never come when we can say we are upon a foundation of peace and contentment? but because we seek it, where it never will be found, in the world, its riches or pleasures; do not make his commands the law of our inward parts, nor rest satisfied with his disposals, nor rely on his perfections and promises, nor know him as the God of love, and the God of our hearts in Christ Jesus.

But is it nothing for a creature made in the image of God, born to know, and love, and enjoy him, who draws every breath at his will, lives upon the bounties of his providence, and perhaps is loaded with his favours, to neglect and forget him, to leave him entirely out of the account of his happiness, and never consider what it is to be a reasonable man and a Christian? I will allow him to be sociable, civil, obliging, ready to do good offices, courting applause, respectable in his station, and amiable in his temper; but, behold! he gives to all their due except God, and perhaps would think it a disgrace to his understanding to be thought a devout worshipper of him, or that he has any dealings with him in the depth of his soul. I say, what is all this boasted excellence of character, however admired by the world; or how can you fancy to yourselves any thing more despicable in the eyes of the supreme Being, more wretched in himself, or a greater scandal to human nature? And what is it that is substituted in the room of God? Shall I speak the word again for your conviction and astonishment? The ever-blessed

bleſſed God ! I ſay, what do you prefer to him, make your great idol, and worſhip with the whole devotion of your hearts and ſouls ? A miſerable world, amuſing its ſons and daughters with a vain dream of pleaſure, perſuading them to contract all their views within the narrow circle of time and ſenſe, hiding eternity from them, robbing them of their God, and withal feeding them with empty hopes, and never paying any thing of what it promiſes. I do not believe there ever was a man upon earth without God, who, in the full poſſeſſion of all that the world can give him, did not at laſt lie down in his grave vexed and diſappointed, beſides being haunted more or leſs all his life with a tormenting fear of death ; and what more can be ſaid to expoſe the folly of ſuch a choice, and recommend the God of all bleſſing and comfort to the chief place in your eſteem ?

Look again at the man who ſets God always before him ; and may it be yourſelf. He thinks nothing elſe worthy of a thought in compariſon of him ; loves him in his will and commands ; walks with him, as one friend does with another, delighting and delighted ; worſhips him in ſpirit and in truth ; knows obedience from a root of faith to be the eſſential character of his ſervants, and the highway to glory ; would ſooner diſpleaſe all the world than his Maker ; chooſes him for his portion, end, and happineſs, in time and eternity ; and thanks him, above all things, for the gift of eternal life, through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord. In a word, he can ſay, with many thankſgivings,

what temptations have I resisted; what follies have I avoided; what remorse of conscience have I escaped; what a precious antidote am I possessed of against the troubles of life and the fear of death; what repose do I find in my soul; what happiness have I in prospect, by setting God always before me! and the language, and continual adoration of his heart is, "Whom have I in heaven, but thee, and there is none upon earth I desire in comparison of thee."

SERMON

S E R M O N VII.

I COR. Chap. iv. ver. 4.

For I know nothing by myself, yet am I not hereby justified; but he that judgeth me is the Lord.

ST. Paul, who had converted the Corinthians to the faith of Christ, met with great opposition to his teaching and ministry from some amongst them, who endeavoured to turn them from the truth. Alas! no sooner had he sown the good seed, but the enemy came and sowed tares; raising up every where false brethren to call his doctrine in question, and preach another gospel. Hence came divisions and heart-burnings, some declaring for one teacher, some for another; and, as is usual in such cases, unreasonably exalting the heads of their own party, and taking great pains to vilify and disparage those whom they did not choose to follow. This grieved the soul of our apostle. He knew that truth was in danger of being lost in the contention, that they would all be hurt by it, and that it would bring great scandal upon the Christian name and profession; and, therefore, with tender concern for his dear converts, and becoming zeal for the purity of the gospel, he writes this epistle to them to remedy those disorders, and exerts all his authority to put a stop to the growing evil. The aspersions which were thrown upon him, he did not regard on his own account; but as he knew
that

that the doctrine he had delivered was likely to stand or fall by the good or bad opinion they entertained of him, he found it necessary, in order to preserve them from error, and prevent their being led away by his opposers, to stand up in his own vindication. "Let a man, says he, so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God." He could not be deceived in his call to the ministry; he had received his commission and instructions immediately from the Lord Jesus Christ; and, appealing to his conscience for his fidelity to him, he could say, in the words of the text, "I know nothing by myself." But lest the Corinthians should take occasion from hence to suppose that he gloried in himself, and was confident of his perfection in the sight of God, he would not suffer them to continue under this mistake for a moment, but immediately corrects it by saying, "yet am I not hereby justified; but he that judgeth me is the Lord." In one part of this declaration we have the duty, in the other the faith of a Christian. And these I shall make the two heads of my discourse; beseeching God to assist me in it, and open what is said to your hearts.

I. Every Christian should know in his own conscience, that he faithfully and sincerely purposes to be guided by the rule of God's commandments, so as neither to live in the neglect of any known duty, or in the commission of any wilful sin,

II. This

II. This knowledge of our sincerity is not a sufficient ground of our justification, or to be depended on as what will entitle us to the divine favour at the day of judgment.

I. It should be our aim, sincere desire, and constant endeavour to have such a conscience, as that we may say with the apostle, "I know nothing by myself."—It is true, all are ready enough to say this from the good opinion they have of themselves in the darkness of a natural state, having never seen either what sin is, or what a strength and being it has in them: But if ever we say it upon good grounds, we must first know ourselves better, and how vainly we pretend to this character, if we never were laid low in our own eyes, and, in the want of it, cried to God for mercy. It is the glory and great design of scripture to cure us of this blindness, to discover us to ourselves, to bring us in repentance and humility to God for the remission of our sins by Jesus Christ, and to convince us of the necessity of becoming new creatures, in the sincerity of a pure obedience, by the power of the Holy Ghost. And the first of these is the first in the order of our conversion. The Spirit opens our eyes to see our sin, and then brings us to Christ for healing in his blood and all his benefits. Every man is hidden from himself, stands before God in the confidence of a falsehood, and is incapable of mercy, let him be what he will in the eye of the world or his own opinion, so long as he denies or excuses his sin.

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Do you know nothing by yourself? Do you live in no known sin? Are you watching, striving, and praying against all sin in the fear of God? Do you set the commandments before you, to guide you into all duty, and be the law of your inward parts? Have you always done this? And if not, can you remember the time when you were made sensible of the danger of your condition, and took up a resolution of turning to God in repentance? I may say of some, I fear many, who hear me, it has been your way, ever since you could discern between good and evil, to put the law of God from you, and harden yourself in a course of impenitence, by flying to vain excuses—as that God is merciful—that the flesh is weak—that none live without sin—that you hope and intend to grow better some time or other, you know not when;—or if you are not one of those fools that make a mock at sin, and go on desperately in an evil way; if you generally refrain from scandalous vices, and have a decent life to plead for yourself, yet you will not be persuaded of the necessity of making deep search into your conscience, of laying the rule of God's word to your heart, and looking for sin in yourself where he does. You will not be convinced of the great and general corruption which cleaves to our nature; and if you never had the grace given you to see, and lament it, and bring it before God in repentance, he has damning sin to lay to your charge for your numberless transgressions in thought, word, and deed.

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The example of St. Paul himself will help you to understand what I am saying. Before his conversion he was circumspect in his behaviour, made a conscience of his obedience according to the strict sect of the Pharisees, and was so persuaded of the value and merit of his righteousness, that he persecuted the Christians to death for calling it in question, for declaring boldly to all the world, that, in God's sight, no man living could be justified, and for preaching Jesus Christ as the only Saviour of sinners. You know how he was stopped in his mad career with a high hand, and plucked as a brand out of the fire. And when the scales fell from his eyes, and the light of heaven shined into his soul, what did he then say? Not as he does in the text, when the faith of Christ had changed him into another man, "I know nothing by myself;" but, "when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." When the law was laid open to him in its whole length and breadth, not only as putting a restraint upon his outward actions, but as reaching the heart and all its motions, he found he had taken a false measure of himself by it; sin was chargeable upon him, and strong in him, and he saw clearly that death was its desert.

See, therefore, how we may, and certainly do, deceive ourselves, till we are thoroughly searched by the law. If we have something of a decent appearance, and generally avoid gross sins, we shall be extravagantly puffed up with it, when all the while we are vile and abominable in the sight

of God, and utter strangers to the truth and purity of an universal, inward obedience. Would you then be able to say as he did, and could say truly in his new state under Christ, you must take the same method. You must give up the pride and deceitfulness of your hearts. You must no longer stand with God upon a little difference of behaviour, natural good temper, or civility of manners which you may have more than some others. You must first know what sin is, and that the guilt of it is upon you. And when, by faith, you " behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world, and fly to Christ as your only refuge from condemnation, you will then be in God's way of forsaking all sin, keep the mark here set before you continually in your eye, and have an earnest desire to say, " I know nothing by myself."

This every disciple of our Lord must wish and endeavour to say, for we are not to look upon it as the peculiar attainment only of an apostle, or too high a matter for ordinary Christians. It is true, that, among the faithful followers of Christ, there may be, and are, different degrees of holiness, according to men's different capacities and opportunities, and for reasons best known to God; but if there is not a sincere purpose of heart, with suitable endeavour to do the whole will of God, there is no holiness at all. If there is a reserve for a darling lust, any such halting with Christ, as to say, with respect to any allowed sin, " the Lord pardon me in this thing," there is

no

no obedience in the case, even though it could be supposed in all other points to be perfect and entire. So you would think and judge yourselves of a child or servant, who was bent upon having his own will, in opposition to his known duty and your just commands, in any one instance. Consider, I beseech you, what would the state of mankind be, if every one was at liberty to have his beloved vice with supposed allowance from God? At this rate every commandment might be broken; every sin would be carried to its utmost height; every man would choose for himself, and plead an exemption for the foulest crimes, fraud and injustice, lewdness and intemperance, robbery, and even murder. You see, at once, there would be no living in such a world as this.

Again, What is the state of a soul under this persuasion, that the law of God may be altered or dispensed with, but that of rebellion and contempt of his authority? Where is its duty and submission? What is its integrity and love of holiness, if it can entertain a desire, or be pleased with the thought of opposing the will of God, and allow itself in the practice of any thing which he forbids? Verily, the words of Christ stand full against all such wicked imaginations, and thus he speaks to every man—"it is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail." It must, therefore, be a first principle with thee, O Christian, never to be questioned, a sacred rule never to be departed from, that as "the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just,

just, and good," in the whole and every part of it, so thou canst only be a servant of God, through Jesus Christ, by keeping and maintaining in thy heart a solemn purpose of universal obedience. If you should stand amazed at this, and say, one and all, who does so think and resolve with himself? Who is thus perfect? Who then can be saved? I would ask you in return, Do you *not* thus believe and purpose? Do you indeed think that any command of God may be slighted? Do you avowedly retain a will of sinning, more or less, in a great matter or a small? You cannot say this to your hearts. You may be vicious in your practice, enslaved by evil habit, and find it hard to break loose from it; but you cannot so put out the eye of your reason, and much less darken all scripture, as to persuade yourselves that the law of God may be broken with impunity, or that a soul in such a state is not absolutely unconverted, and in danger of perishing.

Let us then observe carefully where our duty and safety lies, and keep close to the words and example of St. Paul, "I know nothing by myself." Your consciences bear witness against you that you cannot truly say this. Do not stifle this conviction; confess that you cannot, but then let it be to humble yourselves before God; and beware of supposing that you may speak peace to yourselves, and sit down contented with your state, though you have no such will or desire. This knowledge should lead you to repentance, and bring on a change of your heart and whole
soul

soul in the great point of your obedience, *i. e.* so as to be sincere with God, and grounded in this belief, that there must be no exception in it; for that would be a most dangerous deceit, and a fatal hinderance in your way to Christ. If you come to him at all, it must be for the grace of remission, with a sense of the great evil of sin, and of your own sinfulness. But if you harbour an opinion that you may be excused from any one duty, or have an allowance for any one sin, this would not be coming to him to plead a pardon, but destroy your title to it, by declaring your resolution of continuing in rebellion against him. And when you *have* received him by faith to save you from your sins, this persuasion must never leave you, that whatever he commands must be a law to you, and that it is your work and business under him to be improving in holiness, and going on to perfection. You may not attain to it, but you must not dispute his will. Upon the peril of your souls you must neither make a law for yourselves, nor set the mark of your obedience lower than he does; but be always coming nearer and nearer to it, and grieve for nothing so much as that you come short of it.

Who then, I say again, is the Christian? The man who is careless and unawakened, and though he is not amongst the greatest of sinners, yet never thinks in earnest of the necessity of coming to this point with God and his conscience, that he must purpose and endeavour to be entire in his obedience; or he who thinks as he prays, "thy
will

will be done in earth as it is in heaven," strives to come as near to St. Paul as possible, and wishes, with all his heart, to say, "I would not willingly omit one known duty, I would not venture to break one commandment; if I might have my choice it should be to sin no more?" You may be slow of belief in this matter, and, perhaps, now pleading against it within yourselves; but in the meantime you are trifling with your souls: For nothing less than the truth of obedience, in will and endeavour, is the truth of conversion; and the doom of all those who are so corrupted in heart, mind, and judgment, as to believe and practise the contrary, is already pronounced by our Lord himself: "Whosoever shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, or teach himself so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven," *i. e.* he shall not enter into it.

But does not St. James say, "in many things we all offend?" Does not even St. Paul say, "what I would, that do I not?" with more to the same purpose, *Rom. vii.* supposing he is there speaking of himself? And how then could he say as he does here, "I know nothing by myself?" Observe, therefore, and understand, that he speaks, in the text, of the sincerity of his heart and intention, both with respect to his ministry, and the whole tenor of his life. He took the will of God for his rule without gain-saying, and made it his great endeavour to conform to it in every thought, word, and action, as one that knew he must appear before the

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the judgment-seat of Christ. In like manner, we must all look well to the sincerity of our hearts, and have the testimony of our consciences, that we receive the whole will of God, refusing no duty, living in no sin; but faithfully endeavour to walk in the way of his holy commandments, without turning aside to the right hand or to the left. And if we will not submit to this doctrine, and keep ourselves to this strictness of judgment and conscience, we must not think ourselves the servants of Christ: We must not call him Lord, or pretend to belong to him, whilst we are under the influence of a disobedient spirit, and assume a right of pleasing ourselves in opposition to his authority. We must think ourselves well and happy under his government; and be ready to say, whenever we are tempted to sin, this is against the law and love of Christ; I will not break my faith with him who has so dearly bought me to his service, nor give up my interest in him at so cheap a rate; I must, and with God's help I will, be sincere with him all the days of my life, in doing or forbearing whatever he requires of me. Less than this we must not be aiming at; and the nearer we come to it in the settled frame and bent of our minds, the happier we shall find ourselves in every condition of life: For it may truly be said, that we are only miserable by transgressing the divine commands; and he is certainly the happiest man upon earth who says, in imitation of his divine Master, "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God;" and with St. Paul, "I know
nothing

nothing by myself," as to any will or intention of disobeying God.

I do not suppose that all Christians are in this state, or that they can attain to it all at once; but we cannot be Christians without a purpose of attaining it, more than any thing else in the world; and this purpose of the heart is well-pleasing to God, and will be attended with a blessing. We must keep our eyes steadily fixed upon it, and be always pressing forward. We must not, by any means, shorten the rule of our duty, but take it just as God has put it into our hands, first to judge, and then fashion ourselves according to it. We must at no rate say, this I will do, or that leave undone, when we know what is the will of God in the case. Nay, farther, you must know, that being thoughtless and indifferent in the matter of your obedience, is a very bad sign. If it is not come to be a great and weighty point with you, and clearly the resolution of your hearts, to do the whole will of God, you are not walking with him according to the faith of the gospel, and want a necessary proof of Christ's being in you. One great privilege and promise of the new covenant you do not so much as desire, that God would "put his laws into your mind, and write them in your hearts," *Heb. viii. 10.*

But now when we are in this state of truth and sincerity with God, still we must look for a better hope, and a more sure foundation to rest our souls upon. For our best obedience will be found wanting

wanting in the sight of God, and according to the strictness of his judgment; and, therefore, it would be running a desperate hazard to venture our salvation upon it. As it is the *duty* of a Christian to endeavour to say, "I know nothing by myself;" so we are directed by the apostle not to stop here, but to hold fast the *faith* of a Christian, and say farther as he did, "yet am I not hereby justified; but he that judgeth me is the Lord."—Let us therefore now pass on,

II. To consider that this knowledge of our own sincerity, in the highest degree of it we ever shall attain, is not a sufficient ground of our eternal justification, nor to be depended on as what we will abide by at the day of judgment. Why? What should be the reason that a person, so diligent and zealous in his ministry, so careful of his obedience, and so clear in his conscience, as Paul was, should not, therefore, think himself justified, or entitled to the reward of eternal life? Hear what he says of himself in another place: "Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world?" And again, towards the close of his laborious and well-spent life, we find him making the same profession of his constancy in well-doing: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me

only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." You see he had run well; and why then should not he, or any other man in the like circumstances, judge he had deserved the prize? My brethren, he knew better, as appears by all his writings. He was the chosen instrument of God to reveal his nature to the world; to declare the universal prevalence and desert of sin; to discover life and death, with the means of obtaining the one and escaping the other. And when he says "he had fought a good fight," he meant he had made full proof of his faith, and did not thereby intend to contradict his own doctrine of salvation by faith, or build his hope of acceptance on any thing he had done, though it was a hundred times more than those have to boast of who make a merit of their works, and are so backward to understand what he has fully testified, over and over again, concerning the utter insufficiency of all human righteousness. A crown of righteousness he looked for, and rejoiced in the assurance of it; but mark it well, it was because he had "kept the faith," that very faith of "salvation by grace," which he preached, lived in, and maintained against all opposers.

The opening of the point is this; and I beseech you, attend. Our obedience, to approve itself to God, must be perfect, according to the strict meaning and full extent of his commands. When he forewarned Adam, that "in the day of his transgression he should surely die," he could not revoke the sentence, in case of disobedience, with-
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out denying his truth and justice, and also giving mankind occasion from thence, in all times to come, to slight his authority, and disbelieve his threatenings. We know he did not revoke the sentence. Our first parents died in every signification of the word *death*, in their souls and bodies, in a temporal, spiritual, and eternal sense; and must for ever have been held under it, if God had not provided a remedy for them in that promise, "the seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head." When we measure God by our own line, and pretend to know him better than he does himself, we have many a plea, both of weakness and wilfulness, to put in against his threatenings, and tell him boldly what we think is fit in every case, and how he must deal with sin and sinners. So the enemy, taking advantage of our deceitful hearts, still plies us with his first subtilty, and easily draws us into a belief, that God will sooner break his word, and make himself a liar to all the world, than proceed to punishment. But this solemn transaction betwixt God and the first offenders, stands, at the entrance of the Bible, as a full proof of his steady, eternal purpose, and is the unalterable revelation of his nature and will, with regard to sin. And it is farther remarkable, that the divine wisdom has thought fit to record little else of the history of our first parents, after their creation, and the command given them, besides this particular of their fall, and of his pronouncing the sentence of death upon them; not only that mankind might take warning from hence of his holiness and in-

flexible justice, but to fix their eyes singly, as it were, upon this one point, and that they might have nothing else to draw off their attention from it.

It concerns us greatly to understand this fundamental article of revelation, insomuch that, if we are not well grounded in it, we shall learn nothing else from scripture, neither the nature of God, nor the nature and desert of sin; neither the necessity of redemption, nor the grace and mercy of the Redeemer: For God has but one will and one law, in all ages of the world; and as sure as death was the consequence of the first man's sin, it is the wages of every other sin, in every other man, from the beginning to the end of time. And the obedience which he requires of us, as the ground of justification, must also be perfect, not according to our own fancies, perverse judgment, and corrupt wills, but according to the rule and measure he has given us. For as "by the law is the knowledge of sin;" so the right knowledge of the law is, that every transgression is sin, and every sin is death; because, "curst is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them," *Gal. iii. 10.* And not only so, but the interpretation of it in Christ's hands, *Matt. v.* comes close to the heart; and if the commandments, any one of them, is broken there, we are excluded at once from the plea of performance, our obedience is gone for ever. It is this knowledge, not as it lies in the book only, or the head, but as convincingly applied

plied by the Spirit to the heart, which humbles the soul, and makes it lie down before God. When we see not only that God has numberless sins to lay to our charge, but that any one of them is sufficient to destroy our title to his favour; this is indeed a deplorable case, but, withal, a necessary point of knowledge.

The reason why God never gave any other law than that of perfection, either to Adam in paradise, or to the Jews at Mount Sinai, (and he never revealed any other) is not hard to understand; for, besides that, whatever God does, cannot but be founded in truth and equity. It is evident, that whenever he gives a law to his creatures, it can admit of no abatement or alteration; because this would, in effect, be leaving us at liberty to obey as much or as little as we pleased. If we knew, upon good warrant and authority, that we might do less than is commanded, or do the contrary, we should hardly keep ourselves within any reasonable bounds. We should be little concerned about our obedience, and make short work with the law, if we were allowed to suppose it might bend to our convenience or inclination, and that we are not, in all cases, obliged to the strict observation of it. But, behold, God has told us no such thing. He knows his own sovereignty and our interest better. He is ever at a word with us, and says to every soul of man, "do this and live," transgress and die. If ever there was a sin which might have been spared, we may presume it would have been the first; as all generations

tions were to be involved in the consequences of it, and share its punishment. But, nevertheless, the sentence against it took place, as to the death of the body, and the labour, pains, and sorrows of this mortal life ; and the remaining part of it, relating to the death of the soul, was reversed in such a manner, as to shew the doom of sin in the strongest light, and vindicate the truth and justice of God in the sight of men and angels.

For, happily for us, it *was* reversed. We are "all concluded under sin," so as to have no way to avoid the charge ; we are plainly convicted of it, and liable to its penalty ; but not to lie under the curse of it for ever, unless by our own fault. It would be dreadful indeed to think we had no relief in this extremity, and were left to perish without hope and without remedy. But the sight of a world, miserable and helpless, "lying in darkness and the shadow of death," was no light matter in the eyes of God. "He whose compassions fail not, and whose mercy is over all his works," has contrived the means of our recovery, manifested himself to us in all the glory of his goodness, and may yet be found of us as our God and Father. In order, therefore, to understand in what way hope comes to us, how we are released from condemnation, and received to a covenant of life, sinners as we are, let us now turn our thoughts to the Son of God dying for the redemption of soul and body, making full satisfaction to justice, and yielding a complete obedience to the law in our stead. Sin was declared worthy
of

of punishment, even death, and death it must have. Perfect obedience was demanded, and it must be paid in full measure. Who suffered what we deserved? Who performed the obedience we could not? Who was the peace-maker and mediator between God and man, without injury to law or justice, bearing the punishment of sin, and doing the whole will of God in the utmost perfection, that the sinner might be spared and admitted to favour? My brethren, this is so weighty and essential a point of our religion, so necessary for the peace and comfort of our minds, so happy a truth in itself, and such a loud call to our hearts for suitable returns of love, that if we are not well instructed in it, and made alive unto God in the belief of it, whatever else we know, we know nothing as we ought; whatever we do is of no value in the sight of God. What I mean, is Christ's undertaking for us our deliverance from wrath by him, and acceptance for his sake, "according to the good pleasure of the will of God, and to the praise of the glory of his grace." That one text is full assurance in the point, if there was not another such in the whole Bible: "He (God) made him (Christ) who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." He treated him as a sinner, as the greatest of sinners, yea, as all sinners in one, that by his offering of himself a sacrifice for sin, and perfect obedience unto death, we might be totally and for ever discharged from guilt and punishment. Christ by the appointment of God, and his own voluntary oblation of himself, hath done and suffered what he did purely for
this

this end, that we might be accounted righteous in and through him, and stand as clear of all blame before God as if we had never sinned. This is the foundation of our peace, and the anchor of our hope, the great grace and peculiar blessing of the gospel ; the one, sole method ordained of God for our eternal justification, and not any lame works, imperfect duties, or scanty obedience of the greatest saint that ever lived. This is the salvation declared to Adam in paradise, conveyed by him to his children, renewed to believers in the several ages of the world, and at last fully manifested and accomplished in the coming and person of the blessed Redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ, and according to this faith we stand or fall for ever. On this ground we are safe ; in this belief, and this only, we have full relief against all our fears, and all the accusations of conscience ; with this light in our hands we can see the way open for us to heaven, notwithstanding our manifold defects. It must be the way of holy obedience ; but not to be pleaded, or trusted in, as full payment to the law, and full performance of our duty, because in its best state it is imperfect, and cannot possibly be accepted for its own sake.

You now see why St. Paul, after the declaration he had made, that he “ knew nothing by himself,” immediately, and in the same breath, withdraws that plea ; you see clearly that no other man must take it up, and that, for the reason here given, because “ he that judgeth us is the

the Lord." He does, and cannot but require perfect obedience from us. He will not suffer man to controul him, or repeal his law, by saying, thus much I will do and no more. If it is broken more or less, sin is found upon us, and our souls are forfeited; and where will it not be found, when he shall "judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ?" When he comes with his rule in one hand, and the book of heart and life in the other, who can abide the trial? "Who shall stand when he appeareth?" "Who can say, I am clean without transgression?" Not Noah, not Abraham, not Job, not Daniel, not David, not Paul, not Peter. Oh! it is a searching word, "he that judgeth me is the Lord?" "His eyes are in every place, beholding the evil and the good," and he "seeth not as man seeth." Every day and hour, every action of our lives, every thought, intention, and purpose of the heart, and every word of the tongue, must be brought to account before him, and weighed in his strict balance.

Will not this shake you off the bottom of self, tear away all your vain confidences, and drive you to Christ the only rock? You have been baptized in his name, call him your Saviour, and think you believe in him; when in the main you slight him, and make ten times more account of a few acts of customary worship, heartless prayers, and what you call your good deeds, though they are soon reckoned; and none will stand you in any stead, if you have not fled to him as your only refuge from the guilt of sin, and "the Lord your

righteousness" in a day of trial. You dream away your lives in the easiness of a superficial, blind faith and outward profession ; but do not cleave to him for life, having never had the sentence of death in yourselves, never seen the shortness of all your best works and duties, or entered into the depth of this saying, " he that judgeth me is the Lord." But if ever your eyes are opened to see what you have done and left undone, if ever you know a passing from death unto life, the sense of your sin and miserable unworthiness, and of the necessity of Christ to save you wholly, will be so strong upon your minds in the power of the Holy Ghost, that you would not go without him, nor lose your interest in him for the world, you will then know of a truth, that in speaking peace to yourselves, and thinking all safe for heaven, because you are not open, scandalous sinners, and have some form of religion, you trusted to a broken reed. And whoever he is that has no knowledge of Christ for salvation, never was troubled in seeking after him, or earnestly desired his benefits, as I fear is the case of great numbers, dies a lost man, if he is called out of the world in this condition.

My brethren, be not afraid to know the truth of your state. Your sins are many and great, and may well strike a damp upon your hearts ; your obedience is very imperfect, and you must needs be ashamed to present it to God. What then can you do but look to Christ ? Bless God that you may, and that you have your call to it : " Look
unto

unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth," *If. xlv. 22.* Look any where else, look only, or chiefly, at yourselves, and you will never know peace. Paul will tell you why he was not daunted; but, on the contrary, always rejoicing in the Lord, though he knew he was to judge him; "being justified by faith," says he, "we have peace with God through Jesus Christ our Lord." And again, "as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." Know the value of God's peace, and hold to Christ's righteousness, and you may pass through the world full of hope, lie down in your beds with a quiet conscience, and meet death without fear. Make any thing else your confidence, and where then will be your quietness, assurance, and ground of rejoicing; and how will you ever be able to bear up against the tormenting thought, "he that judgeth me is the Lord?"

But may all come to Christ, and be happy in this trust, that he is their Saviour and Peace-maker with God, their atonement and righteousness? Is this hope for the ungodly and for sinners? Yes, when they know their danger and misery in sin, are burdened with it, and would be glad of mercy; when they come to him for a new heart and a new spirit, as well as for washing in his blood, and can be content with nothing less than his whole salvation. He came into the world to save sinners, and has none but such to save, and can save the greatest; and this is his praise in heaven

and earth. But then the work and glory of his salvation is the mercy of God to us, and the power of God in us; and he cleanses none from the guilt of sin who will not be freed from the love of it.

Observe, therefore, the drift of this whole discourse, and how the two parts of the text hang together. St. Paul could say, "I know nothing by myself." So every Christian would say, and knows that his heart is not right with God if it is not his aim, endeavour, and sincere prayer. You may, perhaps, think that saying this truly, is enough for salvation; and, I believe, is what the generality think more than enough: But without Christ it is nothing; and that we are thereby justified, was more than St. Paul durst say. In the faith of Christ he was a new man, but knew, to the last, he could be saved only by Christ. Let us be the better for his teaching and example. Let us learn of him these two great points of a Christian state, the way of justification by faith in Christ, and a pure obedience in the love of Christ. Let us make Christ our trust, and our all, without being concerned at the reproach of an ignorant world, as if this was making him the minister of sin; without any fear of diminishing from our obedience by so doing, or having our attention taken off from the other part of the words, as the rule we should walk by, and the mark we are pressing to, "I know nothing by myself." On the contrary, the two parts of the text confirm and support each other, and the

the belief that, through Christ, we shall be enabled to stand before God in judgment, is the gospel-means of bringing us to God in the sincerity of obedience, from the ground of a thankful heart.

So faith works ; and if it does not, proves itself at once to be false. When we come to Christ for life, hope, and comfort, praise God for him, and rejoice in the great deliverance he has wrought for us, we shall cleave to him in well-doing. In the belief of his grace we shall keep his commandments. If we take him for our Saviour, we shall take him for our Master, knowing that he is a master who will be obeyed, and choosing to obey ; crucifying sin in ourselves, because he was crucified for it ; serving him with dutiful affection, and fearing nothing so much as to offend him whom we delight to call our Saviour. When we have laid him for our foundation, elect and precious, and are established in the faith of complete deliverance and redemption by him, not only from the death we are under by the sin of our first parents, but the countless sum of our own, as this matter is presented to our view, *Rom. v. 15—17*. We shall “ give all diligence to make our calling and election sure ; ” and in the hope of seeing him in his glory, “ purify ourselves even as he is pure, ” dreading the vanity of a dead faith, neither fruitful in good works, nor converting the heart, nor engaging to prayer ; and desiring to say, with his blessed servant, in the truth of an obedient conscience, “ I know nothing by myself. ”

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To sum up all in a word, "in God's sight shall no man living be justified;" but every believer *shall* by the grace of God in Christ. And as sure as we are true believers, "accepted in the beloved," we shall learn of him to follow after holiness, and give ourselves up to the will of God. May we all experience such a work of grace. May the good spirit make us all such Christians in faith and purity, that being grafted into Christ by our own choice, act, and deed, as well as by baptism, and knowing how "mercy rejoiceth against judgment," we "may serve God without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life." Be always praying thus yourselves, and aiming at it in the power of a true faith. You may think it hard to have a clear conscience with respect to every commandment, or so much as sincerely to purpose universal obedience; but it is full as hard, first to see yourselves condemned sinners, and then to think you can be justified only by believing. Whenever you are awakened, you will be all for doing, and this thought will abide with you a long time, that you must cleanse and heal yourselves as well as you can. Faith and practice are both hard, and I know not which most; and yet both in scripture are declared necessary to salvation. We must not, however, be discouraged, and sit down in despair; but do as we would in the case of a dangerous distemper, or broken limb, look out for help; especially as it is promised, and we know infallibly where it is to be had. The consequence is, *Pray*. Go with your sin and weakness to the
 God

God of mercy, and the giver of every good and perfect gift, sure of relief suited to all your wants; and always remembering that "it is he who worketh in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure," to the end we may be helped effectually, feel our hearts warmed with gratitude, and praise him for his gifts in time and eternity.

SERMON

S E R M O N VIII.

PSALM xxii. 28.

*For the kingdom is the Lord's : and he is the governor
among the people.*

THIS Psalm contains, in brief, an account of our Lord's suffering state upon earth, of his death and resurrection, and of the happy effects which were to follow, in the conversion of mankind from a state of gross darkness and wickedness in idolatry, to the acknowledgment and worship of the true God, willing subjection to Christ, faith in, and faithful dependence on him for all his benefits. "My seed," says David, speaking in the spirit of prophecy, and in the person of Christ, above a thousand years before his birth, "my seed shall serve him, and shall be counted unto the Lord for a generation," *ver.* 31. They shall be restored to a new capacity of serving God, and, as members of his family and kingdom, entitled to all the promises he has made, and all the blessings he has to bestow upon his well-beloved children. "All the ends of the world," says he, "shall remember themselves, and be turned unto the Lord," *ver.* 27. The great salvation here spoken of, shall not be confined only to the Jews, who, at the time when David penned this Psalm, were the only covenanted people of God, but published throughout the

the world, and offered to men of all nations ; many of whom would remember themselves, awake as out of a dead sleep, acknowledge their past ignorance and forgetfulness of God, see their unhappy condition in sin, turn to him in repentance, seek his favour, gladly embrace his covenant of peace, and live to his service. " For," at the time of this general conversion and restoration of the world, " the kingdom is the Lord's ; and he is the governor among the people." He who, in right and power, is the sole Lord and governor of the universe, and whose kingdom ruleth over all, shall reign in the hearts of his people, and be honoured as God by their dutiful submission and willing obedience to him.

In order to secure so great a blessing to us, and recover us to this state of faithful subjection to God, on which our happiness depends, Christ, " when he had by himself purged our sins, and was set down on the right hand of the majesty on high," sent the Holy Ghost to dwell in us, and make all he had done and suffered effectual to our salvation ; to instruct and quicken us ; to enlighten our understandings and renew our wills ; to convince us of our great sin in being turned from God, and bring our straying hearts back again to him in love. As on the one hand it is our misery, curse, and death, that we are naturally alienated from God, live to ourselves, and to our own wills ; so, on the other, here is a prospect of restoration and happiness opened to us, in our returning to the duty of creatures, and to a

state of professed subjection and obedience to the God and Father of our spirits. And we are hereby plainly given to understand, that as it was one great end of Christ's coming into the world thus to recover the hearts and wills of men to God, so it is a matter of the utmost necessity to every soul of man; and, likewise, that whenever it is done it can only be done by him, and in the way of his appointing. For though we should see the necessity of living in perfect subjection to God, and endeavour in sincerity, and with all our strength, to bring ourselves to it, yet our labour will be in vain if we are not first grounded in Christ. This, therefore, is what I am now to open and explain; and I beseech God to assist me in it, and bless what is said to your instruction. Lord grant that the Spirit, which on this day was given to the world, may breathe upon us, that we may live and praise thee for our renewal to thy image in righteousness and true holiness.

I. I shall give you a brief description of the state mentioned in the text. And,

II. Shew how it is to be attained.

I. The state mentioned in the text is that in which the soul, knowing itself to be the creature of God, and subject to his universal dominion and sovereignty, consents to receive a law from him, and submit to his government; in the belief and acknowledgment, that as he has an absolute right to govern us, so he cannot but do it in the best manner

manner for his glory and our own good. And when this becomes the ruling habit and temper of our minds, and the settled purpose of our hearts, our obedience will likewise be full and unreserved; and for the same reason that we obey God at one time, or in one instance, we shall think ourselves bound to obey him at all times, and in every thing he has commanded, or we know is agreeable to his will. There must be no exceptions to it, and the obedient man makes none. Whatever God is pleased to order for him in the course of his providence, whether it be prosperity or adversity, sickness or health, life or death; whatever he enjoins in his word, and however contrary it may be to his inclinations, sense, or opinions, he is set down in this belief once for all, that God's will must take place, and, therefore, frames himself to a quiet, cheerful submission to it. For if we should object to any thing he does to us, or command us to do, and plead difficulties when we should be resigned and obedient; what would this be but prescribing a law to him instead of receiving one at his hands, choosing for ourselves, and, upon the whole, withdrawing ourselves from his government? Not but that, in most cases, our duty is so plain and evident to ourselves, that we cannot act against it without being knowingly false to our own interest, and doing violence to our own reason and conscience. But let this be as it may, whenever the will of God is made known to us, our road is before us with a clear light shining upon it from heaven; our duty is bound

upon us, our obedience is demanded, the kingdom is the Lord's, the heart of man must submit.

This is that happy state of subjection to God we were made in, and made for, the health and well-being of the soul, our glory, and perfection. Departing from it was the sin of the first man; and the great quarrel which God has against us, is, that we are continually acting it over again, by setting up our own wills in opposition to his, and refusing to be governed by him. He calls aloud to us to consider our ways, has contrived the means of our recovery, and is always ready to bless us in our endeavours of returning to him in obedience; but if we finally slight his instructions, harden ourselves against his warnings, and will not see the extreme danger of the way we are in, we must perish in our sins.

Now, therefore, be sincere with God, and faithful to your own souls, and confess the truth. It is a blessed thing to have the Lord for our God, to be with him as a dutiful child is with its father, to set him upon his throne in our hearts, to have our wills bowed to his service, and our souls wholly turned to him in resignation and obedience; but then this is not your state. You either live in known sin of some kind or other, and have altogether broken the yoke, and burst the bonds of his authority, or else you flatter yourselves that you are governed by him, when you are not. You mistake a decent life, and outward civility of manners, which has no better foundation

tion than natural goodness of temper, sense of reputation, or regard to worldly convenience ; I say, you mistake this for conversion to God, and a full determination and steady purpose to live to his will, and be at his disposal in all things, as he shall enable you. You seldom sit down on the evening of a Sabbath, perhaps you never set apart one hour in your whole lives to consider what your duty is in its full extent, what obligation you are under to perform it, and how very much depends upon the right frame and temper of your hearts in this respect. You do some things for the ease of your minds, and to keep your consciences quiet ; but there are many others which you leave undone. You do nothing as unto the Lord, under his eye, in pure obedience to him, and with a view to his glory. Indeed you cannot, till you comply with his method of doing it. You are bound hand and foot ; yea, “ dead in trespasses and sins.” Breath must come into you from above ; and if ever you become the children of God, in the newness of a free obedience, it can only be by power from him, who worketh in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure. Which leads me,

II. To shew how this state is to be attained. The scripture is express, that “ without holiness no man shall see the Lord,” *i. e.* without a settled purpose and sincere endeavour to do the will of God from the heart. Not doing this, as it was the sin of the first man, and brought death into the world, so it is the sin of every man ; for
“ sin

“ sin is the transgression of the law” of God, and “ the wages of it” at all times “ is death.” And to shew us the great evil of all sin, and our unhappy condition under it, together with the way and means of deliverance, by removing the curse of it from us, and subduing the strength of it in us, is the design of all scripture. Now, whenever we have our eyes opened to see the desert of all sin, the greatness of our own, and the necessity of holiness, the first thought we naturally betake ourselves to, and it is as far as our own reason can carry us, is that we will make our peace with God, by forsaking our sins, and a more conscientious obedience for the time to come. Confess and forsake them we must, upon the warning and authority of Christ himself, who begun his preaching with saying, “ Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand ;” meaning, that without repentance there is no entering upon his way of salvation, called the kingdom of God, because by it we become members and subjects of his kingdom of grace here upon earth, and shall be admitted into his everlasting kingdom of glory. But observe carefully, as it is a matter of life and death ; he does not say, repent, and ye shall be saved, as if nothing more was to be done to reconcile us to God, and secure our title to heaven. This is the greatest of all mistakes. It is a flat denial of scripture, utter ignorance of the nature of God therein revealed, and the sacredness of his law ; which, when it is once broken, subjects us to death, and leaves us under its curse. It is in effect telling God how he shall save us, limiting

ing his justice, and setting what penalty upon sin we please. In a word, it is being our own redeemers, establishing our own righteousness for salvation, and making Christ die in vain.

What then is the soul's relief under the apprehensions of its danger and misery, and where shall we go for help with our defilement and wretched weakness? If we are all guilty before God, and no repentance or endeavours of our own can alter our condition and restore us to his favour, what is the hope of condemned sinners? I beseech you to hear it, and I pray God it may sound sweetly into your hearts: It is, saith St. Peter, "the word which God sent, preaching peace by Jesus Christ, that, through his name, whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins." "This is the word of faith which we preach," saith St. Paul, "that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart, that God hath raised him from the dead"—and by this convincing proof marked him out for the Christ, thy deliverer—"thou shalt be saved." "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth," saith St. James. "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin," saith St. John. See how the apostles of our Lord, with one consent, declare these glad tidings to a guilty world—that though we are miserable and undone in ourselves, can do nothing to satisfy the divine justice, or recover our first happy state in God, have no works or righteousness of our own to plead before him, and must let that alone for
ever,

ever, yet he has come down all the vast distance between us, given his own Son to pay the debt we owed him, made him our surety, our atonement, and righteousness, and in him is well pleased with us; thereby manifesting his nature of love, and making all his goodness pass before us, for our present peace and everlasting salvation.

Stand fast here in fulness of belief; reach out your hand to this cordial; let your soul meet this mercy; receive this grace as grace, under a deep sense of your want of it, and as the riches of God's goodness to you a perishing sinner; say once joyfully, "there is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus;" and then mark what use an apostle, who was perfect in this lesson himself, will teach you to make of it. "We love him," saith St. John, "because he first loved us." He means that in all reason we should; it is a sacred, strong bond upon us to do it. And we shall do it, if we have any ingenuousness or sense of gratitude; if any thing in the world can oblige, or take hold of us. The superabundant love of God, in giving his Son to die for us, when we were rebels, and enemies to him by wicked works, is such a powerful attractive, carries such persuasion in it to win our hearts to him, and bears with such force upon our minds, that we cannot well resist it. If we understand and believe it, our next enquiry will be, what shall we render unto God for so great a benefit, "Lord, what wouldst thou have me to do?" Our Saviour tells us, "If ye love me, keep my commandments."

As

As if he had said, surely you cannot but love me, when you consider what I have done for you; and the only return I expect from you as a proof of it, is, that you would put yourselves into my hands, to be created unto good works, and to a new state of willing obedience.

Thus then it is that "the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ, and that he is the governor among the people." Here is our advantage for holiness; this is the scripture-ground of it and scripture-call to it, and you now see how I have brought this matter to a point. When we are "rooted and grounded in love, and comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height of the love of Christ, (which indeed passeth knowledge)" the natural and proper working of our faith will be a desire to please God in the way of his appointing; for love is the fulfilling of the law; and those who before were so backward to obey, so stubborn in their own wills, and fast bound in the hardness of an evil nature, will be disposed to receive a law from God, ready in Christ's freedom to run the way of his commandments, and prize his holiness as the health of their souls, and a necessary part of his salvation.

I do not mean that we are sufficient of ourselves either to believe the love of God in Christ, or to walk worthy of it when we do. No, the Spirit must be with us in every step of our progress, to

convince us of sin, to work faith in us, to keep us steady in it, and make us lively in our obedience. But then he does not deal with us as so many stocks and stones, or by putting an absolute force upon our natures, but gives in his help in the way of our own reason; that is, by presenting thoughts to our minds, enforcing them upon us by his secret operation, and so gaining the consent of our wills. And this argument of God's love to us is, in the Spirit's hands, of all others, the most powerful to recover our hearts to him, and settle us in the truth of obedience from love.

Let me, therefore, in conclusion, recommend these two points to your belief and most serious consideration, as the sum of all I have said; first, that without the faith of Christ we can never attain to holiness; and secondly, that if he does not govern us we cannot belong to him.

1. I have already observed to you what a mighty advantage we have in the sense of God's love to us for keeping his commandments, and how forcibly it draws our hearts and wills to him in the way of a pure obedience; and what I am now farther saying is, that if we are not first well grounded in the faith of his great mercy to us, in forgiving us freely, and delivering us from the sentence and curse of the law by the death of his Son, we shall never attain to the holiness which is required of us by the gospel. Take away this ground, with the Spirit's aid, who lays it, and works with it, and what remains but the corruption

tion and weakness of nature, blind to itself; and when it would set about a work of reformation, bringing it down to the low standard of its own thoughts and abilities, acting by constraint, struggling with difficulties which it cannot overcome, and resting, at the best, in a few lifeless, outward performances? Whereas it is the great excellency of faith to reach and purify the heart; and the love of God shed abroad in it by the Holy Ghost, both binds Christ's whole yoke upon us, and makes it easy. If our faith is strong, our endeavours after universal holiness will be sincere and hearty; if it is weak, they will be weak; and just in proportion as we believe the pardoning love of God in Christ, we shall find ourselves disposed to make him suitable returns of love, and live unto him that died for us, in all the duties and exercises of our Christian calling, keeping close to God in prayer, and living as we pray.

And now you see the reason why you are so careless of your obedience, and so little recovered to God in holiness, according to the teaching and example of Christ; why the breaking of one or more, I will venture to say all the commandments, when rightly understood, is as nothing in your eyes, and gives you no real concern; why you take God's name in vain, and prophane the sabbath, or keep it only in part; why you defraud, and speak evil one of another; why you covet, envy, and bear malice; why the ax is never laid to the root of inward sin and evil lust-
ing; why so many of you, who call yourselves

Christians, shew little or no regard to the solemn, dying command of your Lord to remember him in the holy sacrament :—It is because he has no tie upon your hearts. It is because you never were burthened with your sin ; never once cried out with St. Paul, “ O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death ? ” Never saw the greatness and necessity of Christ’s salvation, and, therefore, whatever you pretend, or however you may have been taught to speak, do not truly believe in him as your Saviour. My brethren, lay it to heart ; make haste, and escape for your lives, for,

2. If you are not governed by him, as you never will but in the faith of his love, and the power of his Spirit, you do not, you cannot belong to him. He has pronounced the doom of all such, “ those mine enemies, who would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me.” Is it then weighty upon your hearts, that all the disciples of the crucified Jesus must come in upon his summons, submit to his authority, and hear the invitation of his love ? If ever you call to mind what he has done for you, and how dearly he has purchased you to his service, can you think much to receive a law at his mouth, or refuse him the tribute of your obedience, when you know it is his due, and what he so earnestly and affectionately requires of you ? You would scorn any man who thought so meanly of you, as that you could be ungrateful, churlish, or disobedient to the best friend you have upon earth ;

earth; and are you the man or woman who fling the almighty love of your God and Saviour, and set yourself stubbornly in opposition to his will? When he says, thou shalt love the Lord thy God; thou shalt not take his name in vain; thou shalt keep holy the sabbath day; thou shalt not do this or that thing which my soul hateth; you turn a deaf ear to him from year to year; hate to be reformed, and will take no warning. And can you be so wretchedly deceived as to fancy you belong to him, and that he will own you at the day of judgment? Upon cool reflection you cannot think it possible. All scripture is against you. You cannot open any part of the Bible that will not fly in your faces; and I dare appeal to your own consciences, whether they do not bear witness to that saying of St. Paul in particular, "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ," to be led by him, "he is none of his," he is no child of God.

Know then that there is terror in the cross of Christ, as well as love; and at the same time that it speaks peace to the penitent and believing, it proclaims aloud the accursed nature of sin, God's abhorrence of it, and will to punish it in every soul of man that obstinately continues in it. And let me beseech you, by all your hopes, not to think confusedly of this point of your obedience to the Saviour, but come to a clear understanding of yourselves. Do you read the scripture to know what God commands, and what the law is which you are to be governed by? And do you
read

read it with this thought and purpose, that you must and will be governed by what you hear, assuredly believing that the mercy therein revealed, if it does not rule, cannot save you? You need not be blinded in so plain a case; if you love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity; if you love your souls, you will not; but remembering and considering how he has redeemed you from the curse of sin by the labours of his life, and the sufferings of his death, that he might present you to God, washed in his blood, and clothed with his perfect righteousness, you will answer his love, and fulfil the desire of his heart, by applying yourselves with diligent endeavour and true prayer, to know his will that you may do it. You will pass through the world with this thought deeply engraved in your hearts, and these words always sounding in your ears—"the kingdom is the Lord's; and he is the governor among the people." "For so," and not otherwise, as an inspired apostle witnesses, in opposition to all self-deceivings, "an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly, into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

SERMON

S E R M O N IX.

ROMANS XV. iv.

For whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning ; that we, through patience and comfort of the scriptures, might have hope.

HOPE is of something desired and wished for. And, in proportion to the opinion we have of the thing hoped for, we generally use all the methods in our power to secure it, and think ourselves happy or unhappy, are pleased or discontented with our state, as we are likely to succeed, or in danger of being disappointed. So we act, and so we are affected, with respect to the things of this world. According to the settled judgment we make of their value and usefulness, and especially if we think them necessary to our happiness, we keep them constantly in view, bend our thoughts that way, pursue them eagerly, and put forth all our strength to attain them.

So we *should* be affected with respect to the concerns of our souls, of God, of Christ, of eternity. We should learn from scripture to place our hopes on the immovable foundation of God's word and promises, in full belief that we shall not fail of our end, but have something to trust in that
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cannot deceive us, and will be the stay and comfort of our lives. This is our wisdom as men, and our profession as Christians. This is what the apostle here calls us to ; and it is worth our while to enquire what it is. And if we find that it is suited to our wants, and will answer all our wishes, then, my friends, lift up your eyes and hearts to it, and put yourselves in a way of securing it. Hear what St. Paul says—"Whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning ; that we, through patience and comfort of the scriptures, might have hope." What is this hope ? It is the hope of reconciliation with God, of living and dying in his favour ; in a word, the hope of salvation by Jesus Christ. Happy are the men and women who make it their hope, rejoice in it, hold it fast as their only treasure, and would think themselves utterly undone if it was taken from them.—Let me, therefore,

- I. Tell you what we are without it.
- II. What we are, and what our behaviour will be, when we really have it. And,
- III. I shall exhort you to understand, receive, and embrace it.

Blessed God, it is a great thing I am speaking of ; thyself, thy Son, thy love to a lost world ; the present comfort and everlasting happiness of us all. Oh ! do thou speak where man cannot. Call powerfully to the dead soul, which has hitherto

thereto resisted thee in unbelief, that it may now at last listen to thy word, and pray with me for a blessing upon it: Make it as a refreshing shower upon the hearts of all here present, that they may be fruitful in faith and love, in every good word and work, and grow up unto thee day by day in the hope of everlasting life, which thou hast given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ.

I. I am to observe to you what we are without the Christian hope.—With respect to our state and being in this world, God himself has written vanity and vexation of spirit upon all our hopes and expectations from it; and the scripture tells us once and again, that “man that is born of a woman, is of few days and full of trouble.” So said Job, xiv. 1. So likewise said Jacob, Gen. xlvii. 9. “Few and evil have the days of the years of my life been;” after enjoying as much prosperity, and as many signal blessings from the hand of God as any we read of. He was not unthankful for the favours he had received, but what he said is left upon record for our instruction, and set up as a warning for all future travellers in the same road, that we might not build our hopes upon the sand, and that none might delude themselves with vain prospects of rest and happiness from a deceitful world. And does not the experience of every man living confirm what he said? Our best-laid designs miscarry; our fairest hopes are blasted; and every thing about us and belonging to us, our bodies, substance, relations, all bring in this verdict against us, and

declare, with one consent, that our rest is not here, and that the world will as certainly deceive us as it has done every son and daughter of Adam from the beginning.

Do you trust in your strength of body, and promise yourself a long life in the uninterrupted enjoyment of health? Do you think and say within yourselves, when your substance is increased, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years, take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry?" To-morrow's sickness may convince you of your folly, and a few days more lay you and all your hopes in a coffin, and reduce your estate, whatever it is, to two yards of earth. Do you promise yourselves much comfort and satisfaction from your relations, husband, wife, or children? Alas! their life hangs by a thread as well as your own. Death takes them from you, with a stroke like that of tearing the heart out of the body, and they leave you under such a weight of sorrow as you hardly know how to bear: And as to your children in particular, whose prosperity you have so much at heart, it generally falls far short of your wishes and expectations. If they die, great is your trouble; if they live, they may vex you with their miscarriages, plague you with their ill tempers, and give you sad cause to mourn all your lives over their vices and follies. These things happen often, and are so much the common lot of mankind, that there is no founding a reasonable hope or expectation of happiness upon any thing in the world. We are almost sure to be

be crossed in every thing : Either we do not gain it, or soon lose it ; or if we are allowed to keep it, find but very little of that comfort and enjoyment from it we vainly promised ourselves.

Consider only this one thing : There never was that man upon earth who could truly say, concerning the world, that his heart was at rest, and he had what he wished for. That hour never comes to any of us, though we are always fondly looking for it, and flattering ourselves, one generation after another, that it will come. If it is the attainment of so much wealth, as once looked great in our eyes, and we fancied would answer all our wishes, alas ! the man is like one who has drunk salt-water, and instead of being satisfied with what he has gotten, only finds his thirst increased for more : Let it be what it will, we are convinced by sad experience, that it is not the thing we want. Whatever we have, we shall assuredly be stretching our thoughts beyond it, hope and long with restless desire for something else, and at last lie down in our graves disappointed. So truly does the Psalmist represent our condition, with a particular mark of observation set upon it, (*Selah*) if we are so foolish as to centre all our hopes on this life,—“ Verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity.”

But this is not all, or the worst of our condition, as natural men, without the scripture-hope. We are vain creatures in a miserable world because of *sin*, and as being under the curse

of it. All the crosses we meet with, all the disorders in our bodies, all the sorrows we groan under, the death we dread and must inevitably undergo, are either the tokens of God's displeasure against us for sin, or sent and ordained to prevent it; in-somuch that if there was no guilt in the world, we might boldly affirm there would be no suffering of any kind. We know that from the beginning it was not so. We are told that when God saw every thing that he had made, he beheld it with delight, and pronounced it to be "very good." But now, surely, he does not delight in our misery, vexation, and disappointments of all kinds. He did not stamp his mark of approbation upon this. He made us good, and for good. He did not make death, nor consequently the pains and sicknesses which lead to it; but the first man, by sinning, brought it into the world; and what would never have been a natural necessity if man had continued innocent, is now become the just sentence of condemnation upon all flesh. Well might one say, (Esdras) "O Adam, what hast thou done?" What a curse hast thou brought upon thyself, and upon the souls and bodies of us all, by disobeying thy Maker?

My brethren, let us not pass over one of the first things we read of in scripture so carelessly in our minds, as I fear we generally do. The sin and punishment of the first man stand recorded in the word of God, as a most important lesson of instruction, and an everlasting warning to mankind, of the infinite evil of sin, and God's hatred of it.

And

And if we do not learn from this part of scripture to judge of our present state and condition in the world under sin, and the mischiefs it will bring upon us, we shall learn nothing else from it. For did the first sin of the first man fall so heavy upon him, and was the threatening against it executed, notwithstanding that a world of unborn creatures were to suffer with him, and come under its penalty and curse? What then is sin in the judgment of God, all sin, every sin, yours and mine? Doubtless, if we consider the matter, we cannot avoid coming to this conclusion, that if God is the same, and sin the same now that they were from the beginning, every sin of every other man, every single sin we commit, how little soever it may seem in our eyes, makes us guilty before God, and will expose us to a like sentence of condemnation. What that sentence is in its whole extent, I have not yet told you. The scripture does—"The wicked shall be turned into hell; they shall go away into everlasting punishment." So that whatever we suffer on account of sin during our abode on earth, is nothing to what may come upon us hereafter. The bitterness of sin, the whole weight of its curse, is never felt in this life; and we are miserable beyond expression if we have no hope to relieve us in this case, nothing to set our minds at ease from the amazing, dreadful fear of endless suffering in another world.

If you have gone along with me in what I have briefly set before you concerning the vanity of
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man's state in and from the world, and the wretched hopelessness of our condition more especially under sin, you will perceive that just here is the time and place for scripture-light to break in upon us, and to enquire whether God has not given some more firm ground of hope for us to rest our souls upon, and enable us to pass contentedly through the world, and resign ourselves quietly to him at the hour of death. For it is one great commendation of the gospel-hope, that it never forsakes us, when all others do; but accompanies us through life, lies down with us in our graves, and will take us out of them to set us at the right hand of God. I say, a hope of God's giving; for assuredly he alone can give it. The wisdom, the mercy, the love of it is all his; and that sin which has ruined our natures, cast us out of his favour, disturbs our peace, and baffles all our designs of happiness, can only be removed, in its guilt and power, by his grace and goodness.

Look then at the humble, happy birth at Bethlehem. Turn the eye of your souls to the Saviour of the world, taking our nature upon him that he might do great things in it and for it; and let your hearts, disappointed in every thing else, lead you to him, as the star did the wise men that came from the east. There is your comfort, and the remedy of all your troubles. "He will keep every soul in peace that is stayed on him," by giving us hope towards God against the fears of a guilty conscience, and making God our hope instead of the false joys, vain allurements,

ments, and empty promises of a miserable world. This is both a glorious, blessed hope, and the only one we can be sure of. With respect to the world, we know, by sad experience, that nothing is in our power, not the choice of our lot in it, not the continuance of any thing we have, not enjoyment from it, not an hour's breath. And the more we build upon any thing in the world, and the higher our expectations are raised of rest and satisfaction from it, the greater will be our grief and vexation in being disappointed. But Christ and his blessings are founded on the everlasting truth and promises of God, given us to trust in, and will be a never-failing spring of comfort to the soul that seeks after them. Peace with God, the redemption of our souls from the curse of sin and eternal life flow from them. What can settle our minds, and make us easy in every condition of life, if this does not? Make this your hope, and then the world itself will put on a new face to you; and though you will not be so foolish as to venture all your hopes upon it, and look for nothing better from the hands of God than it can afford you, yet you will be much more happy in it than you were before. Prosperity will be double, when it is sweetened to you with the sense of God's love; and adversity less painful, when you know that your best, great hope, and the very wish of your hearts, can never be taken from you; that every thing which befalls you in the course of providence, is intended to secure it; and that death, so dreadful generally

rally to those who live without this hope, will put you in full possession of it. But this leads me,

II. To shew what our condition and whole behaviour will be when we have this hope. When we are in a state of hope according to the gospel for the good things of Christ, our whole condition is altered, and the curse we are under as sinners abolished. Now there are two things, more especially, which must be removed out of the way; and till they are, our state may well be called unhappy and accursed—the *guilt*, and the *darkness* that is upon our souls. Let us observe how they are removed by the scripture-hope.

By reading and hearing the scripture, and the great things therein told us, concerning the fall of man, our guilt, corruption, and death under it, the promise of redemption from it, and the accomplishment of that promise in Jesus Christ, we come to conceive hope of our own deliverance, and interest in the promised mercy; that we are restored to the favour of our offended God, shall live and not die, notwithstanding our original guilt, manifold actual transgressions, remaining corruption, and the death that is due to us. For all the promises of grace and mercy to sinners are made to faith; and hope is faith; and something more. It is faith growing and confirmed; faith lively, and in exercise; reaching after, and laying hold on the things believed, and believed so firmly as to be desired above all others, and made the

the ground of our choicest affections. And from hence you may discern the reason of your indifference, and dead coldness about heavenly things : It is because the faith you have, or pretend to have, does not go far enough, nor take such deep root, as to create any strong desire or real hope of them, nor, consequently, put you upon earnest, true endeavours to secure them to yourselves. It is the faith you were bred up in, receive without gain-saying or enquiry, conform to outwardly, and perform some acts of worship according to it, and that is all. The bent of your minds is the same, and your affections as earthly, and as much unchanged as if you had never heard of them. Whereas the faith which goes deep, by a work of the Spirit, and is seated in the heart, proves itself by its hope, which, I will venture to say, is the Spirit's surest witness, and one of the best proofs we can have of our faith. We have as comfortable an evidence as can be desired that we are in the state of believers, and entitled to all the promises made to such, when we are so convinced of the worth and excellency of them, and have such an unshaken confidence in the word of God, as to long after them, and be inwardly stirred up to attain them.

And as faith growing up into a lively hope is the removal of our *guilt*, and of the curse due unto us ; so Christ in us, the hope of glory, is the true light of our souls, and chases away that *darkness* which keeps us blind to our true happiness all our lives. Now, if this is our recovery from a

state of condemnation in sin to all the blessings of Christ, to the hope of God's favour and eternal life—what then are the generality of men doing in the world? If it please God, let it be no longer hidden from you; give way to the discovery of yourselves; hear me patiently. You will, perhaps, think it a heavy charge, and fret inwardly against the word, when you are told that all your care and diligence in your several employments, all your busy thoughtfulness about increasing your store, which, by a sad mistake of scripture, you call improving your talent, or even about a livelihood, is the high road to hell as well as downright wickedness, if you have no better hope, and live to no other end. My reason for saying this, I will tell you plainly; and it is grounded, among others, on this very text of St. Paul—"whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning; that we, through patience and comfort of the scriptures, might have hope." The meaning of which is, that there is no *other* hope, or foundation of comfort for sinners, but what the scripture sets before us; and if we do not make it our hope, and build our comfort upon it, it matters not in what way we come short of it, or how we lose it, whether by neglect, or open sin. For it is a most awakening scripture-truth, necessary to be attended to, and thoroughly believed, that we are by nature the children of wrath, concluded in sin, and under a sentence of condemnation; which Christ himself confirms to us beyond all doubt, when he says, "he that believeth not is condemned already."

Now,

Now, if we are so engaged in the cares and occupations of life, as quite to overlook and neglect our interest in the grace of God which bringeth salvation; if merchandize, and the farm, or daily labour, take up all our thoughts and time, so that we have none, even upon a sabbath, to bestow upon our souls; if the word is choked by over-caring for, or over-desiring, as well as over-enjoying the world; the saving benefits of it are lost to all intents and purposes; the one thing needful is not chosen; our state is unaltered; we are yet in our sins, and the wrath of God abideth on us. Let Christ here speak again for himself. Whatever it is that hinders any from accepting the gospel-invitation, whether the purchase of a piece of ground, or five yoke of oxen, or marrying a wife, or whatever else it is that the world throws in their way to keep them from Christ, he has pronounced of them one and all, "I say unto you, that none of those men, which were bidden, shall taste of my supper." They wilfully slight his call, and refuse his offer; and, therefore, neither remission of sins, nor any other blessing of his kingdom, can belong to them. Nay, there is a still more piercing, severe word, which came from his mouth concerning the damnableness of such a spirit and temper—"get thee behind me, Satan," said he to Peter, when he discovered the worldliness which was lurking in his heart, "for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men."

Do not, I beseech you, turn a deaf ear to what I am now declaring to you, as the testimony and word of God concerning the life of your souls, or reject it in scorn with thinking and saying, that if this doctrine was received, it would be a discouragement to all honest industry and prudent thoughtfulness about your worldly concerns. If it would, I am sure the scripture will not bear me out in it. For it strictly binds diligence and labour upon all, and will suffer no man to think himself a believer, who is negligent of his proper business, an idle waster of his time, and does not provide for those of his own house. And the better Christians we are, the more carefully and conscientiously we shall do this. But here lies the point, and I pray God enable you to discern it: One man toils and drudges on from day to day, and from year to year; but never troubles himself about the Christian hope, never thinks in earnest of the state of his soul, what it cost to redeem it, or what diligence is required to save it; has his heart and affections chained down to the earth, and dies unbelieving and unawakened. He dies miserable and accursed; he launches into the gulph of eternity a lost man. Another follows his business and labour in the world with suitable care and diligence; but at the same time knows the worth of his soul, finds leisure every day to think of it, thanks God for the hope of the gospel, holds fast the promise of a better life, and would not lose it for the whole world. He is come into the light; he is translated out of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son; that
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thick cloud of worldly hopes and fears, and dependence on worldly comforts, which hangs as a curse over the minds and hearts of other men, is vanished from before his eyes. He can look up to God in all he does, and plead his promises in Christ for his support in all states and conditions of life. He may be crossed in the world, as all are, but never greatly disappointed; because, in the main, he expected nothing better from it. He knows he hath a treasure which cannot be taken from him; that he "hath found the pearl of great price, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth it;" that is, he prizes nothing in an equal degree, freely quits all other expectations for it, and makes it his great care to preserve it.—In particular, he desires to walk humbly with God—he is careful to avoid all sin, and be found in all duty—he uses prayer, and all other means of grace, to increase his faith, enliven his hope, and keep him stedfast unto the end.

1. *He desires to walk humbly with God.* He knows his desert from God is condemnation, and that we are all as brands snatched out of the fire. The Saviour, the will to receive him, the new heart to live unto him, the crown of glory—nothing of this is the work of our own hands, can never be a debt to us from God, but is all his undeserved mercy, and free grace in Christ Jesus. Though once, perhaps, he might think himself righteous, as all natural men vainly do, and in this confidence despise others, his present hope has taught him better things. He knows how he
came

came by it. He has seen himself ruined in sin; an odious, despicable creature in the eyes of God, and is always vile in his own, not only for what he was, but what he is, as in his best estate coming far short of what is required of him, and in the account of divine justice always sinful. And when the pride of his heart is stirring him up to compare himself with other men, and upon that comparison to think more highly of himself than he ought, he checks himself with this thought, that the rule we must all be tried by, is not the lives and actions of our fellow sinners, but God's perfect law; and that when he "enters into judgment with us according to it, no man living can be justified." For this reason he desires to lie down in the dust, under a sense of God's pure eye and his own manifold transgressions. He believes the scripture, "that all have sinned," as well as when it tells him "that all believers shall be saved." And his own experience confirms the truth of scripture to him in this point beyond all doubt. He now sees a world of sin in himself which before was hidden from him; and if he could think but for a moment that he has no sin, his conscience would rise up against him, his heart would condemn him. And, therefore, he does not expect to be saved as a saint, but as a sinner; taking the Lord Jesus Christ for his righteousness and whole salvation, and trusting only in mercy from first to last. But though he is not discouraged with the sight of himself, so as to fall into despair, or refuse the remedy of God's providing for him, and the comfort he offers him,

yet

yet his hope will not suffer him to be wicked and slothful, or at peace with his most deadly enemy; and, therefore,

2. *He desires to avoid all sin, and to be found in all duty.* Though he confesseth, with the utmost sincerity, and from a true knowledge of himself, that there is no health in him, with respect to God's most righteous and perfect law; yet he is convinced of his obligations to avoid whatever is contrary to it, and to fashion his heart and life by the rule of God's commandments. To live in known sin, would be the death of his hope.

And here I must warn you against a mistake which you may be apt to fall into, when you hear me speak of the humiliation of God's children, and unfeigned acknowledgments they make both to God and man of their utter worthlessness. I have told you before, they may well do it considering the excellence and purity of God's law, which they are enabled to see in its whole spiritual extent, how much less they love him than they ought; how hard it is to govern all the motions of a deceitful heart, and bring every thought into subjection to the obedience of Christ; all which they are taught of God to account to themselves for sin, and dare not stand upon their innocence before him, though men, like themselves, can lay nothing to their charge. But nevertheless they wage continual war against sin, and do not live in the open breach of any of the commandments; not in lewdness, drunkenness, swearing, Sabbath-breaking,

breaking, or stealing, not lying for gain, not murdering with the tongue; if they did, they could not keep their hope, and durst not lift up their heads before God.

Do not, therefore, take advantage from what they say, and say truly, of their need of Christ's blood to wash them clean from all spot of sin every moment of their lives, to encourage yourselves in wickedness; supposing that as all are sinners, you may find mercy as well as they, though you still continue to harden yourselves against the fear of God: For you quite mistake the matter; they are not sinners in this sense; they know it would disprove their claim to an interest in Christ: And if at any time they are so unhappy as to fall into sin, they can have no ease in their minds till they rise again from it by repentance. They have seen the great evil and curse of all sin in the death of Christ, felt something of the bitterness of it in themselves, have come trembling before God for pardon in the blood of his Son; and dread above all things to take upon themselves the guilt of their former transgressions by returning to a state of open rebellion against him. They have entered into covenant with him to fight against all sin, outward and inward, and to persevere in all duty. Their ears are unstopped. They can hear the Psalmist saying, "Ye that love the Lord, see that ye hate the thing which is evil;" and Christ saying, "If ye love me keep my commandments;" and this they resolve to do. Christ's death and sufferings, his coming into the world by an humble birth,

birth, and going out of it by a bloody death, shew them that in sin, which they did not know before, a depth of evil which they could never have thought of; and his love is a strong bond upon their souls to forsake it, and to abound in all goodness. Holiness is a very precious part of their hope in and from him, and what they cleave to him for as well as his forgiveness. But knowing their weakness, and the difficulties they have to struggle with,

3. *They use prayer, and all other means of grace, to increase their faith, enliven their hope, and keep them stedfast in it, and in all holy obedience unto their life's end.* They are men of prayer, as sure as they are possessed of christian hope; not merely to please God with an act of outward homage, and to get rid of what they are taught to think a duty, but their state drives them to it. Their thoughts run much upon their hope; and their hearts as naturally form those thoughts into a prayer, as we do any thing else which we greatly desire. They are like children at the breast, who cry for their food, have but one appetite, and can be quieted with nothing else, do what you will to them. They understand the meaning of those words, which seem so hard and unreasonable to natural men, *pray always*. The bent of their minds is always to prayer; they pray in secret, pray with their families, and attend constantly upon publick worship; and can no more be contented with a Sunday's religion only, or to take the nourishment of their souls only once a week, than they

would to feed their bodies only one day in seven ; neither do they expect a full blessing in the use of only one means of grace, when they know God has appointed more. Their hope is glorious, worth all their endeavours, and has taken fast hold of their hearts ; and therefore they leave nothing undone, and especially no means of God's prescribing and commanding, to confirm them in it, and put them in a way of attaining it. They read the scriptures, which bring the glad tidings of their hope to them from God, diligently, thankfully, devoutly, and with prayer for a blessing. Sabbaths are welcome days to them, and well employed both at church and at home. A sermon which speaks of their hope sounds sweetly in their ears, and warms their hearts ; and the blessed sacrament, which speaks it far more loudly than the tongue of man can do, which is the standing memorial of the christian hope, and applies the blood of sprinkling to the conscience of the worthy receiver, is a feast indeed, and the delight of their souls.

III. I would now exhort you to understand and embrace this hope, as your portion from the Lord, what he sent his only begotten Son into the world to give us, and all scripture was written to declare and confirm to us. The world is a known cheat, flatters us with false hopes, and deceives in all it promises : And if it answered all our wishes ; if we never met with one cross in it, still what must relieve us from the curse of sin, give us hope toward God, prepare us for a happy death,

death, and ensure to us the joys of eternity? I beseech you understand this: Sin lies like a canker at the root of our happiness, and is the cause of all our troubles; but then the greatest crosses and sufferings of this life are no discharge from it, and if the curse of it is not removed before we die, we must lie groaning under it for ever. Now, what would you think of a man who was under a sentence of death, and might be delivered from it; but instead of using the means put into his power for that purpose, spent all his time and thoughts upon other things, was wholly bent on pleasing and enjoying himself, or amassing wealth in prison, and never awaked out of his vain dream till the day of execution? Verily, it is the case of too many of us, only with this sad difference, that if we die we die eternally.

It is true, and blessed be God for it, we need not die. You learn from scripture, and are often hearing from this place, that there is hope: You know there is salvation from sin and all its cursed effects. But, alas, the sense of your condition, as fallen sons of Adam, and guilty of numberless transgressions in your own persons, is not weighty enough upon your minds, nor the evil and desert of sin so truly perceived, as to engage you to seek after the remedy of God's providing. I pray God give you this knowledge spiritually and effectually, that you may be in pain for yourselves, and cry out, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" And when you are thus awakened, and looking out carefully for deliverance, the scrip-

ture is at hand with its help. It sets before you the hope of forgiveness and reconciliation with God ; tells you how this redemption was purchased ; offers life to your choice, and invites you, in the name of God and by all his mercies, to accept of it. Brethren, we must come to this point ; we must have this hope, and without it cannot be Christians.

Observe what I say : If Christ is not our hope, our treasure, and the great wish of our souls, we can have no other proof to give of our *Conversion*. The hope of his salvation is the very thing which brings us to him, if we know what we come to him for. And when we are grounded and settled in it, we are turned from darkness to light, renewed in the spirit of our minds, and have that great change wrought in us which will yield us true comfort, be our best guard against sin, keep the world out of our hearts, and preserve us in patient waiting upon God : But if we are not come to a true feeling and experience of this hope, so as to rest our souls upon it, nothing that we do in religion, or in the world ; no clemency or kindness of behaviour ; no strictness or sanctity of manners ; no course of action, or practice of devotion, will afford us any evidence of the goodness of our state ; it can be nothing but an outward work and self-deceit. We are the same unconverted men and women, whatever we may think of ourselves, or however we may appear to the world, till Christ is all in all to us, and life by him the great hope and ruling desire of our hearts.

Let

Let me advise and exhort you to bring your religion to this test, and to consider whether your minds are indeed possessed and governed by this blessed hope, " which God, who cannot lie, hath promised since the world began. For it is the hope of our high calling in Christ Jesus; the cordial of life, and the anchor of the soul; what he died to purchase for us; what all scripture was written to teach us; what the ministers of the gospel are ordained to publish, and the Holy Spirit is given to work in us. Happy is the man who can rejoice in it, and says continually in his heart, " Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead:" Who, as a Son of God and joint-heir with Christ, can with an humble confidence look up to him in heaven, as having taken possession of it in our names, and gone thither to prepare a place for us: Who, whenever he takes the Bible into his hands, can say, " here is my estate, my treasure, enough for me to live and die with."

Blessed God! is there such a hope as it tells us of, salvation and life for a world of ruined, undone creatures, dead in trespasses and sins! And is heaven again open for sinners, for me! Yes; here is the promise and assurance of it from the unchangeable God of truth, confirmed to me by his oath, and sealed to me in the blood of his Son. May I never be so foolish as to sell my Christian birth-right for one morsel of meat; a lust, a world?

world! I am here told that, as a believer, "I am come to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and the blood of sprinkling." This is my faith; as a member of Christ, and a child of God, I am an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven; and to come to the full possession and everlasting enjoyment of it shall be my hope: And may He who hath given it to me, the God of all grace, enable me to hold it fast; to fight manfully against sin, the world, and the devil, in the strength of it; and to say to every thing that would take it from me, as Naboth did to Ahab when he coveted his vineyard, "The Lord forbid it me, that I should give the inheritance of my fathers unto thee."

Let us therefore, my brethren, give due attention to what the apostle here says of the great end for which the scriptures were written, "It was for our learning; it was that we might have hope." And if the thing hoped for is exceeding great, and the attainment of it certain; if we have no other hope, and if it is the best we can have, since it includes Christ and all his blessings, we shall not think much to wait for it with patience, in patient faith, patient continuance in well-doing, and patient study of all scripture, which brings us the glad tidings of the forgiveness of our sins, peace with God, and a right to eternal life by Jesus Christ. And as sure as we have this hope, we shall think it our best comfort in all states and conditions, our joy in prosperity, our support in trouble; nay, our great aim in the world will be to take care that we do not come short of it.

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But as we could not so much as know either what this hope is, or how we are to be partakers of it without the scripture, it appears at once to be a matter of the utmost necessity that we should read it diligently, value it as our greatest treasure, in comparison of it despise all other knowledge, and pray devoutly for the Spirit's help to open it to us, and set it home upon our hearts. No vain excuses, no lazy, heathenish complaints of want of time, learning, capacity, or memory, can be allowed in a matter of such unspeakable consequence to the present peace and everlasting happiness of our souls. If the scripture taught an infallible way of thriving and growing rich, or was your title-deed to an estate in this world, not one of you would be ignorant of its contents. There are at all times many persons who live by their labour, and yet can find time every day to read the scripture, and make good their profession of having their portion in it. So would every one of you, if you loved it for the hope it sets before you. Consider what I say. You know it is the conveyance of an heavenly inheritance; and God, who knows it to be his best gift to mankind, and your guide to heaven, has, therefore, in great mercy, put it into your hands, that you may rejoice in its light, and be enriched by it in all wisdom and spiritual understanding. He tells you that "all scripture is given by divine inspiration, and able to make you wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus:" He commands you to search it, that you may come to the knowledge of the Saviour; and he has appointed an order
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of men to assist you in the understanding of it, to explain and enforce it, to keep you close to it, and beseech you in his name to open your hearts to the glorious, pleasing hope of being reconciled to him now, that you may enjoy him for ever. I know this to be my duty and office among you ; and beseech God, for your sakes, to make me more and more sensible of it, that I may stir you up by all the ways I can think of to study and prize the word of God, and be your fellow-helper in the hope of the gospel. To which purpose I shall conclude with an observation concerning the word *scriptures*, and the sense in which it is here used in the text.

Now, it is evident, that by the word *scriptures* in this place, we are chiefly, if not solely, to understand the scriptures of the *Old Testament* ; because, but a very small part of the *New* was then written ; and because it is here said, whatsoever things were written *aforetime* ; meaning, as it should seem, a long time before the writing of this epistle to the Romans, and pointing for the hope here spoken of to the books of the *Old Testament* ; the last of which, the prophecy of Malachi, was written some hundreds of years (four hundred, if not more) before the coming of our blessed Saviour. So that St. Paul hereby intended to affirm, that Christ our hope, and the hope of all the ends of the earth, was declared and revealed in the scriptures of the *Old Testament*, as the Saviour of mankind from the curse of sin, death, and hell. And a very comfortable thing
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it is to every serious, patient reader of all scripture, to observe the mercy of God to a lost world; that the great design of man's redemption was set on foot from the beginning, and runs through the whole Old Testament, as the marrow and kernel, the sum and substance of it, and the chief end for which it was written: That the promise of a Redeemer was given to Adam in Paradise, to be conveyed by him to his children as their birth-right and best inheritance, and by them to their posterity; that it was renewed to Abraham, Moses, and David; preached to the Jews in their sacrifices and ceremonies, and more fully opened by the prophets, as the salvation both of Jew and Gentile. I say, this shews the great importance of the Old Testament, and points out to us what we should chiefly look for in it, and the excellent use we may make of it for the confirmation of our faith.

The improvement I would make of this observation is, to put you upon considering what great cause we have to bless God that our lot is fallen to us in the happier times of full gospel-light; when "the day-spring from on high hath visited us," and we have the scriptures both of the Old Testament and the New, to confirm our faith, and raise our hopes; the latter being to the former as noon-day to the glimmering light of a taper. For "in these last days God hath spoken unto us by his Son;" and the hope of mankind, the Saviour of the world, which lay hid in the Old Testament, as it were in its seed, is now fully opened in the

New, and presented to our view in its state of perfection. But to what purpose have we this advantage, if we do not read and study the blessed book put into our hands, to receive the comfort it brings us, to be enriched with its treasures, and made happy by its hope? What can it signify to us that the sun of righteousness hath long since risen upon the world in the person and grace of Jesus Christ, and that his glorious light shines all around us, if it does not shine into our hearts, and scatter the darkness from our souls? the darkness of sin, the darkness of unbelief, the darkness of ignorance, the darkness of a worldly life?

The blessed apostle tells us in this chapter that all God's promises of grace and mercy to mankind were confirmed in Jesus Christ. And at the 13th verse he prayed for you and me, that "the God of hope," so called for the hope he hath given to sinners; O glorious title for us, who otherwise must have been without hope! that "the God of hope would fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost." Surely these promises are nothing to us, our belief is vain, and we read the scriptures without effect, if we do not make this prayer our own; if God's peace, and the sense of our reconciliation to him, is not the joy of our lives; if we do not so "abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost," as to treasure it up in our hearts, despise every thing in comparison of it, think ourselves only happy in it, and in the strength of it resist temptations, live
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above the world, and "keep our lamps burning like men that wait for their Lord."

Hear now what we are in and under our Christian hope, from the Epistle to the Hebrews, "Ye are come unto Mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaketh better things than that of Abel." The meaning is, that as the Jewish tribes, at certain stated times, came from all parts of the country to worship at Jerusalem, and offer sacrifices in the temple on Mount Sion; so all Christians, the true Israel of God, however dispersed through the whole world, are gathered together in one body under Christ their head, to offer free-will offerings with a holy worship, the continual tribute of their grateful hearts, in the New Jerusalem, the city of the living God. And mark it well, this is their happy state and condition now, while they are upon earth. Though they may not see it themselves, it is so in truth and reality, and in the sight of God: For the whole family of God in heaven and earth is but *one* under its glorious head; and his saints on earth actually belong to the blessed society of saints and angels in heaven, through the mediation and sprinkling of the blood of the Holy Jesus, cleansing them from all sin, and which speaketh

better things, and crieth louder in the ears of God for mercy, than the blood of Abel did for vengeance.

God grant that the cry of this precious blood, in all our hearts, may be above our sins and fears; and that, "through patience and comfort of the scriptures," we may hold fast the blessed hope of being numbered with the saints of God in glory everlasting. And many, many thanksgivings be to God from many ten thousands of rejoicing hearts, and happy, redeemed souls, for this glorious hope. O Lord, for thy dear Son's sake, give it into all our hearts in the power of the Holy Ghost, and make it a holy fire of love burning in us day and night; that we may sing with the whole multitude of the heavenly Host, "Glory to God in the highest; and on earth peace, good-will towards men." And all glory be to the ever blessed Trinity, for the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost. *Amen.*

SERMON

S E R M O N X.

ZECHARIAH xii. 10.

And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of Grace, and of Supplications.

IN these words the Prophet mentions that remarkable time when the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, or the Jewish nation, shall turn to the Lord in prayer, from a sense and conviction of their undone state, want of pardoning grace, and especially of their great sin in rejecting and crucifying Christ, and saying, as they do to this day, "We will not have this man to reign over us."

That the time will come for their conversion, and that the main body of the Jews will again be owned by God as his people, all the prophets declare with one consent, and many are of opinion that it cannot now be far off. But what is needful to observe to you is, that the circumstance here particularly taken notice of as a mark of their conversion, and owning of Christ for salvation, must also be a mark and proof of ours; and that it is equally necessary for every man and woman of every other nation, at all times to the end of the world, to have the spirit of grace and of supplications poured upon them, i. e. a gracious spirit of prayer for the blessings of Christ
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and his gospel, from an earnest will and desire to be saved according to it.

This is what I am to open and press upon you at this time, and I pray God enable me to do it to your conviction.

I. I shall shew what this spirit of grace and of supplications is, or, when we may be said to have it.

II. That if we have it, it must be poured upon us, or the Spirit's work in us.

III. That in the want of it, we can have no proof of a work of grace upon our hearts.

I. I shall shew what this spirit of grace and of supplications is. I have told you already in part, that it is a gracious desire of the heart for spiritual good things, and for the health and prosperity of our souls; not for the success of our temporal affairs, or abundance of worldly blessings of any kind: For though we may lawfully ask for them, in token and acknowledgment of our dependence upon God, and are bound to be thankful for what he gives; yet we must be content in the want of them, and willing to resign them whenever he sees fit. These things must not be uppermost in our thoughts, or the great burthen of our prayers. Alas! we have but too much of this disposition from nature; and such a state of mind as this, of continual caring and wishing

wishing for the world, is our curse, and the depth of our fall; and what, if our eyes were opened, we should pray against. That disposition of heart which is meant by a spirit of grace and of supplications, consists in choosing what God chooses for us; and having such a lively sense of the great value and importance of spiritual blessings upon our minds, and of the necessity of obtaining them, as to have our hearts continually turned to him in prayer for them; in considering the favour of God and eternal life as the great end we were born and live for, which we desire above all things, and without which we should think ourselves undone for ever.

When we not only acknowledge the being and providence of God in common with all mankind, but live in his presence, and choose him for our portion, and know that his favour and blessing is infinitely more to us than all the world: When we see our vileness, misery, weakness, and condemnation in sin; dread to continue in it; long to be discharged from the guilt, and delivered from the power of it: When Christ is presented to us by the eye of faith, as an all-sufficient Saviour, and the relief he offers us in the remission of our sins, strength against them for the future, and the gift of his perfect righteousness for our eternal justification, appears to us as the most welcome and seasonable of all mercies, every way suited to the case of sinners, and the very thing we want: When we acknowledge the necessity of the Holy Spirit's operation to convince us of sin, and work
faith

faith in us, and his in-dwelling in our hearts, to change the vicious bent of them; subdue our inbred corruption; natural enmity to God, and opposition to his will: When we are convinced that this world is not our home, or what we were made for; that the happiness of it is a dream; deceitful in its appearance; short in its continuance, and never attained to in such a degree, as that we can say our hearts are at rest, and we have what we wish for; and therefore sit loose to it; set our affections on things above, and turn our eyes and hearts to our everlasting inheritance in heaven:—I say, when we thus know God and ourselves; know our sin and danger; know our want of deliverance; know our great business in the world, we shall beseech him, as for our lives, to keep us stedfast in this belief, to remember us in mercy, and whatever else he denies us, not to deprive us of an interest in Christ; but to guide us by his Spirit, and make us his children, and heirs of his kingdom. Then we put up the true spirit of grace and of supplications; the natural, strong desire we all have for happiness is fixed upon its only right object, and forces the awakened soul to cry to the God and Father of mercies, “Give me thyself, give me thy Christ, give me thy Spirit, deliver me from the evil I feel or fear, and make me fit for thy heaven, or I die.” The man, in whom this spirit is, continually cries, “What can I have a prayer for, if not for the life of my soul; peace and friendship with my heavenly Father; comfort and sweet hope here to bear me up in all conditions, and a blessed eternity?

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Is forgiveness of sins; and salvation by Christ, so light a matter with me that I cannot find in my heart to ask for it; or do I ask for it coldly, and with but little desire to have my request granted? Is there any thing else I could wish for more, than to be taken into God's protection as a child of his family; to have my guilt removed; my faith strengthened, and my will and affections renewed? Let others think most of the increase of their worldly store, and pray for it in the depth of their hearts, as God sees they do, tho' they do not think so, I have but one great prayer for myself and for them,—“ Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us;” refresh us with thy peace, and guide us with thy counsel, that thou mayest receive us to thy glory.”

Here is one praying, according to the apostle's advice, with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit; *Eph. vi. 18.* Like a true beggar, from a sense of what he wants, and with earnest desire to obtain what he asks for. And God denies him nothing. He will give him the Holy Spirit and all spiritual blessings, much more certainly than an earthly parent would give bread to a hungry child that asks it of him; and all things shall work together for his good. His will to ask, is the earnest of his obtaining, and a security put into his hands for the performance of all God's promises. We can be as sure, as we are that God is true, that whatever we ask according to his will, he heareth us, and will grant all our petitions, 1 *John v. 14.* Think what kind of life

can be more happy and pleasant than this, to have that very end in view for ourselves which God has for us, and to know we shall not fail of it; to desire and long only for what we should, and to be infallibly assured that we shall have it. But then know of a truth, that if we have this great end in view, the salvation of our souls according to Christ and his gospel; and if the desire of our hearts is after it, in a state of prayer and earnest supplication,

II. It must be the Spirit's work in us.—The Spirit of God works in us a knowledge and conviction of our lost estate and want of Christ; and then prayer follows upon it, and is preserved in vigour and exercise by his continual abode with us. As we believe, so we pray; and if there is no prizing of Christ, nor desire of his benefits, we never pray according to the will of God. And, therefore, to make way for the Spirit of prayer in us, our sin must be laid open to us, especially the great sin of not seeking after, cleaving to, and loving God; our wills must be turned to him for pardon and deliverance from it, Christ must be precious to us, and our hearts set upon the joys and glories of another life. But now what hard work is here for man, naturally turned from God, denying his sin, and as full of pride as corruption, bowed down to the earth, fond of his present state, and for the most part wishing only for such poor comforts as it can afford him? Here then the Spirit begins with us, and lays the foundation of prayer in the sense of our guilt, misery, danger,

danger, and inability to help ourselves; in turning our hearts against the evil that is in us, and stirring us up to seek after those good things, which God freely offers, and is ready to give us. And it is for want of this sense and feeling, for want of knowing what we are and what we should be, and how little we can do for ourselves, that so many never come to that first prayer of an awakened man.—“Lord, I am ignorant and unbelieving; a poor, sinful, weak creature, and must be undone without help; Lord, have mercy upon me.”

Let not this discourage you, my brethren, nor keep you from ever attempting to break through the difficulties which lie in your way, because of yourselves you have neither understanding to discern, nor the will to desire what God has made known to you for your everlasting benefit. Say not as the children of Israel did when they came to the borders of the promised land, and should immediately have taken possession of it—“we came unto the land whither thou sentest us, and surely it floweth with milk and honey, and this is the fruit of it. Nevertheless, the people be strong that dwell in the land, and the cities are walled and very great; and, moreover, we saw the children of Anak there—men of gigantic strength and stature, difficulties upon difficulties, never to be surmounted,” *Num. xiii. 27, 28*. And so they all, except two faithful, undaunted men, perished in the wilderness.

Say not thou, therefore, "returning to the love and fear of God, and salvation by Jesus Christ, is a desirable thing, but hard to be attained; we are slow to apprehend it, and have no wills to embrace it; flesh and blood has got possession of us, and we know not how to break loose from it, or turn our thoughts from earth to heaven, from the world to God." But consider with thyself that this is a great salvation, the greatest benefit that God can bestow upon thee, and *must* be attained, let the difficulties, in the way to it, be what they will; either this, or damnation. Consider, that what is impossible with men, is both possible and easy with God; that it is he who worketh in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure, *i. e.* his goodness inclines him to work all in us, and he takes pleasure in doing it, and can both turn thy heart to the salvation thou wantest, and thy whole heart into a prayer for it. And if this is not done, it is because we refuse his mercy, and resolve to run all hazards rather than submit to a change of our state. But whenever we give way to the Spirit's work, and find ourselves undone without help, and that there is no help any where for us but in the love and power of God, we shall as naturally turn to him for it, as we look to him for rain and fruitful seasons; and be ten times more earnest with him for a blessing upon our souls, than ever we were, in the depth of our hearts, for any kind of outward prosperity, and think prayer an easy condition of obtaining it. We shall then look on him whom our sins have pierced, as it is here said the Jews will

will do at the same time that the Spirit of grace and supplications is poured upon them.

When the veil is taken from our hearts, and we have a clear sight of sin, and of Christ crucified for it, and of the great goodness of God in giving him to die for us, we shall be very loth to go without our share of it, and strive hard for a blessing as Jacob did; and it will then be with us all as it was with St. Paul, when God struck him to the earth with a light from heaven—"behold, he prayeth." Doubtless he was no stranger to the act of prayer, and had been many times, if not daily, upon his knees. But all the while he prayed in darkness; whereas now his soul was at stake; he was a convinced man; pardon of his sin, and the knowledge of Christ must be had; and for these he now prayed so earnestly and fervently, and with such a different sense of things upon his mind, as that it might be said he had never prayed before.

And as the Holy Spirit thus brings us to a state of true, earnest prayer, by convincing every one of us of our want of help, and of the greatness of Christ's salvation, and stirring us up to call on the name of the Lord for it, so he maintains and keeps it up in us by his continual presence; not only giving us the grace of devotion, but directing us in it, and helping our infirmities; because, as the apostle says, *Rom. viii. 26.* "we know not," in many cases, "what we should pray for as we ought;" and without the fellowship of
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the Holy Ghost, and supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, we should be as backward to this work, and unable to perform it aright, as any other part of our religion. So necessary is it, that the spirit of grace and of supplications should be poured upon us; or, grace to see the greatness of Christ's salvation, and our want of it, and a spirit and will to pray heartily for it. Which brings me to shew,

III. That in the want of this spirit, we can have no proof of a work of grace upon our hearts. A hearty desire to pray, implies knowledge and belief, and is grace begun, stirring, and working in us; a sign that we understand our wants, and prize and seek after the good things of Christ, and all spiritual blessings. Prayer is the very breath by which a regenerate man lives; the pulse of his heart beats strong with it; and it conveys health and nourishment to his soul. On the other hand, where there is no relish for prayer, or actual exercise of it, all is darkness and unbelief, sin is unfelt and unfeared, Christ slighted, his peace undesired, and we live without God in the world. And take notice, that what I say, is not meant of what is called the gift of praying by the Spirit, or a ready conception, and free utterance in prayer, as if I thought this a necessary proof or any certain proof at all, of a work of grace, neither do I undervalue it in those who have it. But the bent of the heart, choice of Christ, and preference of him to all the world; the inward, true desire of the mind and will to partake of his benefits, and
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be filled with his graces;—this is prayer, continual prayer in the sight of God; is heard of him, though a word be not spoken; but, nevertheless, will break out and shew itself in the outward exercise, in a daily waiting upon him in private, and a diligent observance of the times and seasons of publick worship.

There may be, and doubtless are, different degrees of this spirit in different persons, according to the different measures of their faith; neither is the disposition and will to pray always at the same height in any. Alas! the best have but too much occasion to complain of their being cold and unaffected in their addresses to God; and it is their grief and trouble when they are so. But what they *do* ask in the first place, whenever they pray, and would always ask with the greatest earnestness of desire, is to know Christ, to be established in the faith, to love God, and improve in all manner of holiness, according to his gospel. And this is required of all, as a necessary proof of a work of grace in their hearts. It is not coming to church on Sabbath-days, or oftener, or observing a daily method of devotion, which will afford us any proof in the case. We may do this because we have been taught it; or to quiet conscience, as thinking that God requires it of us as a duty, and is pleased with the bare act of an outward worship. But what is thy heart asking in prayer? What is thy great purpose in it? If it is not for the very thing which God requires thee to ask of him, and wants to give thee, and with-

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out which; every thing else he can give would be no better than a curse to thee; if it is not for thy recovery by Christ out of that depth of sin and misery thou art fallen into, for a right understanding of the will of God, free choice of it, and strength to do it, how often soever thou prayest, whatever thou sayest to him in words, still the spirit of grace and of supplications is not poured upon thee; thou hast not the knowledge, faith, and heart of a Christian?

And if this may be said of those who are not altogether prayerless as to the outward form, what must we think of others who have neither spirit nor form, who seldom or never pray in private, and will not set up the worship of God in their families? Why, verily, that if they believe there is a God, they have no reverence for him in their hearts, and do, in effect, say to him, "Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways." They have not that fear of God, which the scripture tells us is the wisdom of man; and in every house where he is not worshipped, you may write upon the door—The plague is within—the plague of unbelief, the plague of an evil heart, the plague of spiritual blindness; master and mistress sick of a deadly distemper, under the wrath and curse of Almighty God, and yet without knowledge and feeling of it, or the least desire to have it removed.

But still I must put you in mind what it is that I am chiefly aiming at in this discourse; which is
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to instruct you in the nature and right spirit of prayer, that so you may know what your religious state is, and how you stand affected towards God and heavenly things. And my design, if it pleases God, is to work conviction in you by this instance, and help you to bring the matter of your salvation to a speedy issue with yourselves. Prayer for Christ, for faith in him, or the continuance and increase of it, and acceptance through him to a new state of holiness here, and eternal happiness hereafter, or else all we do in religion is nothing but mistake and dead formality; this is what I would gladly convince you of. Is God's offer of grace, mercy, and peace, by Jesus Christ, our only relief, his whole nature of love manifested to us, the grand blessing he has to bestow upon us, our great hope in life and death; and are we so indifferent and unconcerned about it, as not to make it the great wish of our souls, and the ground of all our prayers to him? O! let us at last be sincere with God, and faithful to ourselves; let this from henceforth be the language of our hearts. "If this is praying, we are utter strangers to it. We are not importunate with God in secret for the saving knowledge of Christ, and an assured interest in him. We do not ask of him the light of his Holy Spirit, to teach our hearts, to have a right judgment in all things, and joy in his holy comforts. Our comforts are of another kind; and we had rather make provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof, and live at ease in the world. If we might have our choice

of grace or riches, and durst say it to God in plain words, we should ask the latter."

Alas ! my brethren, what a heart is here, if I have truly exposed it to your view ! What blindness and self-deceit do you live in ! How dangerous is your condition ! You are this day a downright unbeliever ; the Lord pluck you as a brand out of the fire. Take not one step farther in the road you are in, for it leads to hell and destruction. If it pleases God to dart one ray of heavenly light into your dark, benighted soul, come to him with a true confession, and get this prayer into your heart ; " Lord, I am in great doubt of my state. I always knew my faith must save me ; but unless a foolish trust in thy mercy against thy own word is faith, I see plainly I have none. When I presented myself before thee in the form of a suppliant, it was not with a design to draw nigh to thee ; I kept myself as much from thee then as at other times ; and I could not ask of thee what thou wast to give. Without a lie in my mouth, I could not say, give me a heart to love thee, and devote itself to thy service ; make me a new, spiritual man in Christ, passing through the world as a stranger and pilgrim, with my eye steadily fixed upon my heavenly country ; for thou who knowest all things, knowest I did not desire it. Lord, look upon me in mercy. Scatter the thick mists of ignorance and error which hang over me. Turn thou me, and I shall be turned ; help my unbelief ; Lord, teach me to pray." Blessed be God, he *has* taught us
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in few words, but all life and spirit, and full of divine sense and meaning. You know I mean the the Lord's prayer, with a brief explanation of which I shall conclude, and cannot have a better wish for you and myself, than that it may be the very prayer of our hearts.

“ And it came to pass, that as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples. And he said unto them, when ye pray, *“say”*—with understanding, and full persuasion of the goodness of what you pray for, and truth of desire to obtain it—*“Our Father”*—our common Father, and Lord of our hearts in Jesus Christ,—*“which art in heaven,”* through thy love our home and inheritance, and the great wish of our souls—*“hallowed be thy name”*—be thou revered, adored, and praised by us, according to thy majesty, and great in our esteem, as thou art in thyself—*“thy kingdom come”*—let thy kingdom of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, come in our souls, and in all the world; that so—*“thy will may be done in earth as it is in heaven”*—by a cheerful submission of every creature to all thy commands, and a devout resignation to all thy providences—*“give us this day our daily bread;”* what thou see'st to be needful for the support of our bodies, contentment with, and thankfulness for, such things as we have, and grace to cast all our care upon thee; and, especially, give us day by day, and every moment of our being, the

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bread which cometh down from heaven, and nourisheth to everlasting life—" and forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us"—those trespasses of ours, which are debts to thee, and must be paid to thy sovereign justice, and could only be discharged by the blood of Christ; and, O! let this great love of thine incline us to forgive all others, and let us not presume to ask forgiveness of thee with any other disposition but to pardon their debts when they cannot pay, and their trespasses against us always—" and lead us not into temptation"—leave us not to ourselves, for then we must fall by every temptation; assist and strengthen us in all the dangers of our souls; and whatever trials thou suffereſt to come upon us, carry us safely through them, and enable us to improve them to our purification—" but deliver us from evil"—from the power and malice of the devil, and from the evil of our own hearts—" for thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory for ever and ever"—we acknowledge thee to be the great *King* of heaven and earth; and fly to thy *power* for succour in all the wants of our souls and bodies; and whatever we are, do, or receive, ascribe the whole *glory* of it to thee. *Amen. So be it.*

Holy Jesus! what a blessed prayer is this! God grant we may all say it in Spirit and Truth. Lord, teach us to pray from a true ground, the desire of pardon, sanctification, and fitness for heaven. Pour upon us the Spirit of grace, and
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of supplications, make this employment the joy and comfort of our lives, and accept us in it, through Jesus Christ our Lord and only Saviour.

END OF THE THIRD VOLUME.